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ABSTRACT

This packet includes reprints of journal articles and other resources concerning building a sense of community among staff and learners in small, rural schools. The four sections of the packet cover involving the community in education, establishing a learning community within the school, using the community as a resource for the classroom, and policy decisions regarding communities. Articles include: (1) "Teaching and Practice: When the Walls Come Tumbling Down" (Paula Lawrence Wehmiller); (2) "Distress and Survival: Rural Schools, Education, and the Importance of Community" (Bruce A. Miller); (3) "Schools and the Communities They Serve" (James S. Coleman); (4) "Schools Reaching Out: Family, School, and Community Partnerships for Student Success" (Don Davies); (5) "Community Schools: A Vision of Equity and Excellence for Young Children" (Jenifer Van Deusen); (6) "Allies in Excellence" (Tony Stansberry, David Westbrook); (7) "School and Community Working Together: Community Education in Springfield" (Susan Freedman, Peter J. Negroni); (8) "Improving Schools from Within: Teachers, Parents, and Principals Can Make the Difference" (Roland S. Barth); (9) "On Building Learning Communities: A Conversation with Hank Levin" (Ron Brandt); (10) "Solving Conflicts--Not Just for Children" (Marge Scherer); (11) "Garnering Community Support with Effective Communication" (Pat Howlett); (12) "'Those' Children Are Ours: Moving toward Community" (Patricia Gandara); (13) "Beyond Parents: Family, Community, and School Involvement" (Patricia A. Edwards, Lauren S. Jones Young); (14) "Accommodating Change and Diversity: Linking Rural Schools to Communities" (Jacqueline D. Spears, Larry R. Combs, Gwen Bailey); (15) "On Improving Achievement of Minority Children: A Conversation with James Comer" (Ronald S. Brandt); (16) "Paths to Partnership: What We Can Learn from Federal, State, District, and School Initiatives" (Joyce L. Epstein); and (17) Policy Perspectives: Parental Involvement in Education" (James S. Coleman). (LP)

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The Regional Laboratory
for Educational Improvement of the Northeast & Islands

Fall 1992

Dear Rural, Small School Leader:

Building a sense of community is a high priority for rural educators. Current research offers a wealth of creative solutions to meet the challenges presented to schools resulting from changes in society over the past decade. As the tenor shifts to a global future, some schools reflect the trend towards interdependence in their desire to create a community of learners among staff and students. At the same time, school/community boundaries are fading. Data can be accessed and transmitted from many localities; books are no longer the sole source of printed information; and students and practitioners with access to technology can reach beyond school walls.

The Rural, Small Schools Network *Information Packet Number 13: Building a Sense of Community*, addresses four aspects of this topic: Involving the Community in the Education Process; Establishing a Learning Community Within a School; Using the Community as a Resource for the Classroom; and Policy Decisions Regarding Communities. We hope that you will appreciate the diverse perspectives presented by the authors.

The first topic, **Involving the Community in Education**, reflects community interest in school culture. For instance, community involvement is an essential component of school restructuring tenets, points out Susan Freedman and Peter Negroni in their article, "School and Community Working Together: Community Education in Springfield." Education is a cooperative effort in Springfield, Massachusetts, involving families, the community and businesses, as well as schools. The authors describe a variety of formal partnership agreements characterized by reciprocity, clearly articulated areas of responsibility, and the involvement of large numbers of people in a concerted effort to improve education.

The second topic, **Establishing a Learning Community Within the School**, presents a viewpoint emanating from the school culture. One article included in the packet, from Roland Barth's Improving Schools from Within, describes a community of learners. Schools pursue community work to create optimum conditions for learning, involving staff and students as active learners. The community is the point of intersection between the youngsters and their teachers, says Barth.

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The third topic, **Using the Community as a Resource,** speaks to the interaction of people from the school to the various talents and resources of the community. When teachers and students engage the community in their learning, they expand their repertoire of resources that set the stage for the inclusion of realistic problem solving strategies in the school program.

The fourth section of this packet, **Policy Decisions Regarding Community**, includes articles on policy decisions that are driven by communities. Many schools have delved into this deeply and can provide insight for communities just beginning to examine the process.

We have provided an evaluation card so you can let us know how useful you have found this information. We also welcome your suggestions for future Information Exchange Packet topics. Please jot any ideas you may have on the card or contact us at the Rural, Small Schools Network, 83 Boston Post Road, Sudbury, MA 01776, (508) 443-7991.

Sincerely,

Virginia L. Warn

John R. Sullivan, Jr., Ed.D.
Program Director
Rural, Small Schools Network

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SECTION I

Involving the Community in Education

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Teaching and Practice

When the Walls Come Tumbling Down

PAULA LAWRENCE WEHMILLER
Independent Educational Consultant, Wilmington, Delaware

In this article, Paula Lawrence Wehmiller addresses the need for restructuring our schools in ways that encourage educational reform, the integration of school and community, and the building of covenants that take to heart the eradication of ignorance and the hierarchical trappings that prevent systemic change. This article is a revised version of the keynote address given by the author at the 1991 Country Conference for School Heads in Maryland, which was sponsored by the Association of Independent Maryland Schools and the Association of Independent Schools in Greater Washington.

There were no walls around our two-room schoolhouse. The noisy old school bus came to a grinding stop at the side of Old English Church Road. As he reached for the big silver lever that unfolded the door, Mr. Gurky, our cranky but faithful driver, looked into the rearview mirror, adjusted his grey cap, and searched in the dim reflection of his charges for offenders of his unspoken rule: big guys stay seated; little children out first. Rule-breakers had to give him a half of their sandwich. Bobby Babcock once made him an eggshell sandwich and broke the rule on purpose.

My sister and brother and I had walked the mile of uphill road to the highway to catch the bus. As we passed the houses of our agemates, we separated into packs — packs of boys, packs of girls, packs of threes and fours. My best friend Gretch and I were the only ones our age from the far end of the road at the bottom of the hill, so we were a pack of two. On mornings when Gretch and her big sister Mary were late coming out of their driveway, I walked alone, sometimes listening to the big girls' conversation or eavesdropping on the boy talk. Mostly I was happy in my own thoughts and wanderings, dreaming about the day's adventures at school.

Everyone endured a fair amount of bus stop banter. Teasing prevailed among the packs. Having an older brother and sister was my built-in protection from

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anyone pushing me too far. The worst that I remember happening to me at the bus stop was having my Brownie cap tossed into the snow bank by one of the Vitale boys, but I was sort of proud of that. Kurtis Bugle took the most grief from everyone. He was naturally grumpy and lived in a stone house with a wall around it. We thought it looked like a fort. Whole myths were built around our lack of experience inside those walls. Like anybody else, we substituted myth for what we didn't know. Just when I began to get nervous that Kurtis was not going to take much more teasing, we would hear the whining downshifting of the school bus as it stopped to pick us up on Route 45.

There was just one bus for all of our section of Ramapo Central School District No. 2. We picked up Adelaide and her cousin in the trailer park; pale, quiet Rose from a bungalow somewhere down a long driveway off a busy highway; and tall Juliana Clem, who saved a seat for the other tall girl, Rita. Rita got on at Mount Ivy. Billie Smith's dad had a mink farm. We were all used to the mink odor that got on with him. Everyone liked Billie, and, as far as I know, the smell was just how we knew we'd gotten to his stop.

Along the back road through peach orchard country, we had three Jackson family pick-ups. Two of the Jacksons were "ck" Jacksons. Their families both had orchards, one with better peaches than the other. The other Jaksons had lost the "c" from before the "k" in their name. They were poor and quiet.

The next few stops were on Buena Vista Road. Everyone on Buena Vista Road was related, it seemed to me. And they all — girls and boys — were good at sports. So was Jimmy Anderson, who lived right on Route 45. He was younger than my brother, Chuck, and would in time succeed him as captain of all our games. Legend had it that Jimmy's older sister was a model. I thought about that a lot. Down Pomona Road was Happy Valley Home. No one ever explained what Happy Valley was all about, why children lived there overnight without their parents. Besides my sister and brother and me, the only other brown-skinned children on the bus got on at Happy Valley. They waited outside of dark, little buildings, and it didn't seem like a happy valley home to me.

The last stop before school was Summit Park — the only development I knew about, though I didn't know the word for it back then. All I knew was that everyone who got on there was a Yankee Fan and a Republican and rooted for war. Most of us on our road were Dodger fans — Brooklyn Dodgers, that is. Our parents used words like peace and race relations. We had Russians and Quakers, painters, musicians, writers, and teachers on our road.

One hour over bumpy, winding country roads later, I was happy to see the little red schoolhouse through the now-foggy bus window. When Mr. Gurky was satisfied that his rule was in order, he opened the folded door and we all paraded off the bus — a motley and mixed parade — little children first. Through the crowded aisle, down the three giant steps I went and bounded off the bus. I felt fine in my hand-me-down dress from Jo Simons, my everyday brown oxford tie shoes and thin anklet socks. My brown, thick, curly braids bounced along on my shoulders, a little worse for wear from the humid school bus ride. I had my big, black lunch box packed by my father. The faint smells of baked beans from my thermos and a sandwich of peanut butter and bacon on pumpernickel reminded me of home and my father's enthusiasm for his own cooking inventions. I was happy to be at school.

There were no walls around the school. The school was for all of us. We were a colorful parade of people with our names, our histories, our temperaments, our looks, our fears, our smells, our haves and have nots, our novice politics, our baseball teams, and our futures, whatever they were to be. We all poured off the bus right onto the blacktop play yard of the school. Beyond the blacktopped yard was a sandy area with seesaws, then a hill down to a meadow below. Swings and kickball games, complete with rules and arguments, waited in the meadow. Beyond the meadow was the woods and finally a stream. Occasionally our recess games even ventured over the stream. There were no walls on that side of the school either.

The school was at one with our world. I carried my treasures, my dreams, my stories, and my imagination to school and back home without ever putting them down. They were part of both my school self and myself, which were the same happy, confident person. I loved school. When I was in first grade and my sister Sara in second, we each got a matching set of shorts and halter top on promotion day for having perfect attendance. You see, I believed then that school could not possibly go on without me.

Now as I travel the country visiting schools, I no longer arrive in a rickety old school bus. Now I pull up in a cab or arrive by an airport limousine, or a teacher from the school picks me up in her Subaru station wagon, with teacher stuff strewn across the back seat and a compost heap of breakfasts-on-the-run on the floor. Sometimes I arrive on foot. But I arrive with the same sense of anticipation that I had forty years ago, the same enthusiasm for the adventure. Perhaps I still have the impression that school can't go on without me. I am still carrying my dreams and my stories and my imagination, if not the lovingly packed lunch box. But this time, as I locate the street number and find the sign that announces the school, I am almost always met with a wall. A stone wall, a brick wall, a chain-link fence, a gate. Sometimes it isn't a wall I can see, but that I can feel. The school is one world and the community around it is another.

The wall around the school tells me that inside is a school of self-importance. It is a school with a history. It had founding mothers or founding fathers, and those people had stories of their own. They had a purpose and a mission. They created a school and invited certain students and their families to become part of the school community. They worked at making it a place of excellence and strength. They created and lived their story, their school, their community. Then they put a wall up around it.

Over the last decade, educators have talked a lot about diversity. During this time we started calling ourselves "independent schools" rather than "private schools." We said we intended to create schools where students of different races, cultures, religions, economic groups, and neighborhoods could come and be a part. In some cases, by diversity we meant different talents and learning styles, people who are differently able in a variety of ways. Different from the majority. Different from the students the founders had in mind. Different from the students the original mission was written about. We said that since we have an excellent education to offer, why not offer it to students in the world beyond our walls. And so we invited diversity of all kinds to come through the gate and inside the wall.

Today I want educators to think hard about the traditions and assumptions that live on inside the walls of our schools. And as we face the twenty-first century, I want us to dare to ask what we really mean by inclusiveness and diversity. Do we mean that we want to take the walls down? Do we mean we want the school to be at one with the community? Those walls protect our institutions. They protect the assumptions that have been made for generations about what is best for students — what to teach, how to teach it, how students learn, how to prepare them for college and beyond. From the beginning, the walls defined who the insiders were — and who they were not. And the walls successfully kept who they were not out of their view. Once inside the school, there are little walls everywhere — rituals and symbols and language and habits that represent the way it has always been. Do we mean we want to look at these, carefully dismantle them brick by brick, and discard the ones that aren't relevant or that actually offend? What happens when the walls come tumbling down?

My father was a trumpet player. He had a big, beautiful tenor voice that sounded like his trumpet. Most people thought that he was a baritone. It was his big, joyful presence that made his voice sound deeper to them than it was. It was not unusual for my dad to burst out in song, often a spiritual, almost anywhere — as he took his vigorous walks up and down the hills of our country road, as he chopped wood and stacked it for the fire, while he was cooking, or as he went up and down the grocery store aisles doing the food shopping. He would burst out in song on Lexington Avenue in New York City if the song came to him and wanted singing. And, though sometimes as an adolescent I would cringe and shrink if I thought my friends were around, I look back on those bursts of singing as a source of strength and joy.

"Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho. Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, and the walls came a-tumbling down." I can hear my dad singing that spiritual with jubilation. The way he sang it gave me the lasting impression that the story was about hard work, courage, triumph, and jubilation. For this reason, I share this story with other educators as it was given to me — as a source of strength and joy — as we face the hard work of leading our schools into the twenty-first century, as we summon the strength we need to do the job, as we invoke the courage we need to overcome the frustrations and fears, as we are rewarded by the joys and triumphs when they finally come.

> *The gates of Jericho were kept shut and guarded to keep the Israelites out. No one could enter or leave the city. The Lord came to Joshua and said, I have put Jericho in your hands. You are to march your army around the city once each day for six days. Seven priests, each carrying a trumpet made of a ram's horn, are to march in front of the Covenant Box. On the seventh day, you and your soldiers are to march around the city seven times while the priests blow their trumpets. Then they are to sound one long note. As soon as you hear it, command your people to give a shout, and the walls of Jericho will fall down.*

> *Joshua heard and he ordered his people to do what the Lord had told him. He warned them not to shout until he told them to, not even to say a word as they marched around the city.*
>
> *Joshua's people marched around the outside of the walls of Jericho once each day for six days, and the seven priests, marching before the Covenant Box, sounded their trumpets.*
>
> *On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city as they had done on the six days before. But this time they marched around seven times.*
>
> *And on the seventh time around, when the priests sounded one long note, Joshua commanded his people to shout.*
>
> *The people made a great loud noise, and the walls of the city came tumbling down. Then all of Joshua's people went straight up the hill into the city and captured it. They were still carrying the Covenant Box with them.*[1]

As I read and reread the story of the Battle of Jericho, as I began to hear the story in my own words, to let the metaphor echo in our own times, I began to understand how the disturbance, subtle and distant at first, crescendoed to the point of urgency, and, finally, to destruction. No one drew swords. There were no guns, no missiles, no obvious violence. This was a more menacing battle.[2] I can just imagine the people inside the city taking no more than a casual glance out the window, wondering why they were hearing trumpets outside there. It reminds me of being high up in an apartment in New York City when sirens are going off somewhere down in the street. At first you wonder a little. Then you dismiss it or deny it. Finally you get used to it. My friends in San Francisco all tell me that they denied the first serious rumblings of the earthquake a year and a half ago. One friend, a professor at a university in the San Francisco area, was chairing an important promotion and tenure committee meeting when the huge, heavy oak table they were sitting around began to dance noisily on its own. Volumes of important learning began to tumble from high shelves. He told me later that the scholarly members of his committee kept doggedly on with their groaning talk, only talking louder to outshout the confusion. He took the lead in ducking under the table, where I presume these distinguished faculty members did not continue their important meeting.

Each time I hear the story of Jericho, I find myself at the end wondering: What happened next in that story? When the walls of our schools come tumbling down, what happens next in our story? What are we commanded to become as institutions? How do we rebuild, re-create, reform in a wall-less school? If the walls come down, the school will be at one with the community. What profound changes will we face, and how will we face these changes in order to triumph?

Imagine for a moment the march of trumpeters parading around the outside of our schools. Whose footsteps do we hear? What are their stories and what worlds do they come from outside of our walls? When they shout and the walls come down, what changes and what challenges will they be asking of our schools?

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[1] Adapted from the *Good News Bible*, The Book of Joshua 6: 1–20 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1976, under license from the American Bible Society).

[2] The image of this as a "menacing" battle with the absence of tangible weapons was given to me in a personal communication with Gay Grissom.

During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, we witnessed the Battle of Jericho over and over as the schools were desegregated in the South. In the beginning there was often only one trumpeter, the footsteps of one lone child. Yes, there were prayer meetings and civil rights leaders, and of course there were the marcher's parents and siblings at home, sick with fear. Do you remember Ruby? Robert Coles told us Ruby's story in *Children of Crisis*, which is set in 1964. At age six, Ruby, born in a sharecropper's cabin and raised by her young Black parents in the industrial slums of New Orleans, walked in her clean school clothes, carrying her lunch box, past the jeering, angry, violent mob of White parents. She walked alone to integrate the school. Coles tells us of the indignities and obscenities inflicted on this small person, ravaging her insides. "Is it only my skin?" she kept asking her mother.[3] And I keep seeing her lunch box, filled with the only tangible signs of love her mother could send to school with her. I keep seeing that lunch box as a Covenant Box. A box with this message inside: *I want to belong.*

Coles tells us of attending a medical meeting in Mississippi in 1958. He describes a doctor at the meeting who "was just recovering from the shock of Little Rock, only to hear that New Orleans was, as he put it, 'next.' He was beyond anger, and a bit of the doctor was in him when he spoke: 'One by one the schools are taking a turn for the worse. This desegregation is spreading from city to city, and we can't seem to stop it. I think it'll destroy our schools.'"[4] No, doctor, not the schools. Just the walls around them.

Ruby's story is still being enacted every day, in and around our schools. These stories are usually more subtle. They are not necessarily stories of physical violence and tangible injury, but they are the stories of the children from diverse backgrounds whom we invite to come to our schools. They are the stories of people coming through the gates, each alone in some way, separated daily from their own stories, histories, and family strengths, from their understanding of the way life works and how to survive it. As they come inside the walls of our schools, they are severed daily from the language, the art, the songs that are the fabric of their lives.

I have a pile of favorite and beloved books that I keep near me. Passages from these books are part of ongoing conversations, like conversations with close friends understood more deeply each time we resume them. In that pile is a small volume called *Dark Testament and other poems* by Pauli Murray. One poem comes to me now. It is called "Psalm of Deliverance, (To the Negro School Children of the American South in the Year 1959)":

> Children of Courage, we greet you!
> Gentle Warriors, we salute you!

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[3] Robert Coles, *Children of Crisis* (New York: Dell, 1967), pp. 75–85.
[4] Coles, *Children of Crisis*, p. 73.

Youthful veterans of upheaval,
Victims of mindless resistance,

We, the wounded and dead of former campaigns,
Unknown, unheralded, unribboned,

The nameless millions, native and migrant,
We are legion and we support you!

From restless graves in swamps and bayous,
From slave ships, slave pens, chain gangs and prisons,

From ruined churches and blazing lynch-trees,
From gas chambers and mass crematoriums,

From foxholes, ghettoes, detention camps,
From lonely outposts of exclusion,

We hear your marching feet and rise,
Silently we walk beside you!

We have returned from a place beyond hope;
We have returned from wastelands of despair;
We have come to reclaim our heritage;
We have come to redeem our honor![5]

The "children of courage," the "gentle warriors" coming through the gates of our schools, are on this silent march. And for twenty years, as I have experienced independent schools as a teacher, a parent, and an administrator, I have walked beside them. I have witnessed the process as newcomers attempt to become a part of the life inside the school community. I see this process happening in five general stages:

In the first stage, families of students are shopping, searching for a school (and the school is shopping for or recruiting students). Of course, in this time of a depressed economy, it is a buyer's market, but in stage one, the school and the student are looking each other over.

In the second stage, student and school are narrowing their selections and choosing. Catalogues and view books serve the schools well; they give the image of inclusiveness and allege diversity, with photographs that show ballet shoes, lacrosse sticks, cellos, and *Peterson's Guide to Competitive Colleges*, strategically placed under the arms of an unrealistic representation of the number of children of color in the school. Although these are good efforts at attracting new families to the school, it is doubtful that they are actually serving the families, themselves.

In the third stage, students newly enrolled in the school and their families are finding their way in this new environment. They are trying to discern the expectations of the school. They are learning the laws, most of them unwritten: how to fit in, how to operate, how to advocate, how to survive. This is the time for handbooks, new-parent teas, picnics, back-to-school nights. Again, these traditional efforts serve the school fairly well — at least they serve the status quo.

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[5] Pauli Murray, *Dark Testament and other poems* (Norwalk, CT: Silvermine, 1970), p. 41.

In the fourth stage, conflicts begin to arise out of the discrepancy between the school's assumptions, values, and character, and the parents' expectations of the school — what they want and value for their children.

In the fifth stage, either resolution of the conflict results in understanding, reconciliation, and, ultimately, belonging, or lack of resolution results in a gulf of misunderstanding and injury. The student and family depart or, worse still, they just retreat, until something upsetting happens to unearth the old injury. By then, no one can imagine what went wrong to upset the injured parties.

Most schools have learned to take families successfully through the first two steps (admissions offices have recently enjoyed a strong and colorful yield from their offers). The process seems to work smoothly until about half-way through stage three. Some time just beyond the back-to-school nights and freshly printed handbooks, the process breaks down: the school has not upheld its part in getting to know the students and families they have admitted, to learn about their stories, their strengths, their gifts, and their fears.

When there are walls of ignorance between people, when we don't know each other's stories, we substitute our own myth about who that person is. When we are operating with only a myth, none of that person's truth will ever be known to us, and we will injure them — mostly without ever meaning to. What assumption did you make because she is a woman? What assumption did you make because he is Black? What myths were built around the neighborhood listed on the application? What myths were built around the employment of the father or the absence of the mother? What story did we tell ourselves in the absence of knowing this person's real story? Remember Kurtis Bugle, who lived near the bus stop behind a wall? We never found a way to take down the wall of our own ignorance about him and find out who he was. So we made up a myth, and I know we hurt him.

The brochures, the view books, and the admissions open houses proudly announce a philosophy of education, the philosophy of the school. With carefully wrought words and choreographed pictures, the school presents assurances that all the students and their families will belong to a fully inclusive community. But when the first misunderstanding about a homework assignment, about a casual comment or gesture from the teacher, about something said in the locker room or on the team bus — when that first misunderstanding presses its weight against the school's philosophy — those carefully wrought images may not contain enough truth to hold it up.

When this happens, you are going to wish you had mined more deeply for the truth. You are going to wish the school had a mission, not a philosophy — a mission that examines the purpose, the meaning, the school's reason for being, and then puts that intention into action.[6] A mission is the result of the choices and decisions made in the life of the school, based on what the school values.

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[6] Daniel L. Klatz, in describing his efforts to help his colleagues in independent schools articulate their purpose more clearly, introduced me to the idea of a "mission" being a stronger statement than a "philosophy."

A mission holds more truth in it than a philosophy, because the truth about the school lies in how the school acts on its philosophy.

The trouble with a mission is that it is the school's truth, and it assumes that the school's truth is the whole truth. But it is really just one side, a piece of the truth. Other pieces of the truth live on the outside of the school's wall. This time, when the gulf of misunderstanding is so great that injury becomes trauma, when some terrible incident unburies itself from the store of repressed hurt feelings, even a well thought out mission with purpose and meaning will break under the weight of the explosion. It will break because in the narrow, walled-in definition of the truth, ultimately the mission serves only the school itself. The walls might just as well be restored as they were. Use some better mortar next time.

To be inclusive, to be excellent, to be who we need to be as a whole community, everyone's truth must be known. Instead of a mission, schools need to create a covenant, an agreement with the school community. It should say that each party to the agreement depends on the others to have a piece of the truth.[7] In a mission, the school defines the students who are in it; in a covenant, the members of the school community define themselves and create the definition of the school.[8] A covenant is a promise to carry the gifts, the stories, the histories, the visions, the dreams of all the people inside the school. It is a promise to take down the walls of exclusion.

Consider the school where, on a field trip, a White bus driver, after several frustrating attempts to "encourage" a Black child to follow verbal instructions he'd given him to sit down, gave him a firm push into his seat. The boy, who had been expertly escalating the original request into a full-blown incident, missed the seat and landed on the floor. Now a school with the most reasonable of philosophies, respectful of families, and welcoming of students from diverse backgrounds, finds itself in the midst of a full-blown, demoralizing war. Enraged Black parents are raising issues buried long ago in their initial desire to adapt to the school. The mother of the offended child, in her rage, has abandoned every thought of courtesy and decency. All the while she is using her boy to run interference for her — holding him up as "exhibit A" at parent meetings, furthering, no doubt, the complexity of his difficulties. In the meantime, a small and tender group of teachers of color are feeling hurt and defeated and impotent. How could they have been expected to be everywhere, to take care of every child of color entering the school? And the principal, who wrote the perfectly reasonable philosophy, can't imagine how they all ended up in this mess. Now they are all mining for the truth, but the truth is so fractured, so buried in the rubble, that it is unrecognizable. No doubt everyone feels the promise has been broken.

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[7] The notion of covenant as I have used it here was inspired by a lecture on the *Book of Exodus*, given by theologian Walter Brueggeman at Immanuel Episcopal Church, Wilmington, Delaware. Brueggeman explains the historical purpose and meaning of a covenant in the life of a community. I have applied his explanation specifically to the context of the educational community.

[8] Abram L. Wehmiller, "The Uncommon Application," *Prism*, Winter 1991, p. 29. I am indebted to Abram Lawrence Wehmiller, whose poem "The Uncommon Application" courageously calls on each of us to "define" ourselves, not to "be defined."

As we approach the work of planning for the twenty-first century in our schools, we must create covenants anew. The children marching around with trumpets outside of our schools carry an important message in their Covenant Box: *I want to belong.* Moment by moment, they will challenge us to reinterpret their school's mission in their presence, in their time. They demand that the vision and the dream be theirs, too. That is what covenant is all about — the promise that their education be about them. As we create covenant, we must look at every aspect of life as it is experienced in our schools and try to find out where the walls of exclusion have been built.

The wall may be the weekly half-day pick up, when a single mother working to pay tuition couldn't possibly pick up her child. The wall may be the second-grade teacher who does not ask that a capable, bright Black boy finish his homework, but instead tells the boy's mother, "He's doing fine and we don't want to push him." Mother knows this will not do for her Black son in the world he must be prepared for; it did not do for her, and she feels frightened and sorrowful and betrayed. The wall may be the complexion of the group that leaves the third-grade room for the ten-o'clock tutoring class in the special-help room down the hall. Or, the wall may be the solid wall of photos of White former graduates in white dresses that one Black senior girl has to endure every time she goes to her locker, all the while imagining that when her class photo goes up there next year, the fancy photographer will surely not know to set the f-stop on the camera low enough to illuminate her beautiful dark face. The camera will read all that white and leave her looking like an ink spot.

What negative patterns are being learned by habits and traditions inherent in even the best of pedagogical intentions? Some of the walls are subtle, some are invisible, but they all must come down.

A word about heads-of-schools as creators of the new covenants of our schools — a word about Joshua. Just before Joshua took on this Jericho job, he had a typical independent school-head job interview. The search committee had him meet with an angel who carried a sword. He asked the question of the angel that any one of us would have asked in that same situation: Whose side are you on — mine or my adversary's? The angel said he was on the side of the Lord. At that, Joshua fell to his knees and asked what was expected of him. The angel answered, "Put aside your shoes, for you are on holy ground."

My word to each of us as creators of new covenants is, "Put aside your shoes." If we are considering entering into a covenantal relationship with the members of the school community, there are parts of the way the headship has been traditionally played that will need to be put aside. It is hard to let go of some of the hierarchical trappings that this involves. But we will need to put aside some of those trappings and habits of headships and come to know — really know — the teachers, parents, and children in our school communities. We will also have to put aside our shoes and know ourselves.[9]

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[9] Elizabeth M. Reis, *A Deeper Kind of Truth* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 63.

And here I want to share with you a piece of the truth that I call my own. I call it my own through hard learning and trials inside the walls of independent schools.

I guess it was in the fifth-grade New York State Board of Regents science curriculum that we were commanded to know that water seeks its own level. So, I memorized that. Later, when I taught first grade in New York City and the children wanted to know how water got way up in the Empire State Building, I discovered anew the magic and power of that phenomenon. Now I see that schools, like water, seek their own level, the level of the community in which they exist. Schools have a potential of their own — an institutional IQ, if you will. An incompetent, destructive leader can come in and push the school's level down, but eventually the school will come back up to its own natural level. In the same way, an innovative, strong leader can come in and push the level up — but only temporarily. Sooner or later, the school wants to come down to its own comfortable position. When a person pushes the school beyond its level, it feels momentarily pretty satisfying. As it comes back down, however, the person who led the way of change pays the price. As leaders in our schools, we had better know what the potential of our schools is, and whether or not we are pushing the schools unrealistically, beyond that potential, beyond what will hold up against gravity. As we create the covenants with which our schools will enter the twenty-first century, we must be sure they are covenants that our schools have the strength to keep; otherwise, we will surely pay the price.

The bringing down of walls is scary, tiring, frustrating work. But tearing down our ignorance, building community, knowing people and their stories and their gifts — their truths — this is joyful work. I hope that one day soon you will be at school walking to the baseball field or striding down the hall, or fixing your lunch in your kitchen at home or walking down Whatever Avenue in Whichever City, and a song will come to you that wants singing. Don't be amazed if the refrain is, ". . . and the walls came a-tumbling down." You'll know then, as my father knew, and as I know now, that it is a song of joy.

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DISTRESS AND SURVIVAL: RURAL SCHOOLS, EDUCATION, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

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Benefiting from Rural Community-School Collaboration

Many rural communities find themselves at the end of the road. Job opportunities have declined. The young and educated have been leaving for metropolitan areas. Businesses have closed. Social services have been relocated on a regional basis. And the fabric of many functional communities has begun to unravel. Mutual survival has become a compelling reason for communities and schools to work collaboratively. It also makes good economic and educational sense.

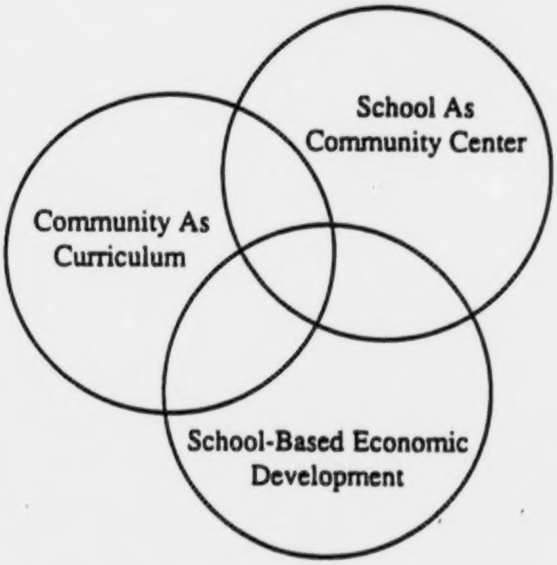
In the past, working harder was enough to keep rural communities alive. But as Hobbs (1988) has pointed out, rural communities must now work smarter, capitalizing on their inherent strengths and unique features. Many rural schools and communities have already begun to think smarter. Led by the work of Sher (1977), Wiggington (1985), and Paul Nachtigal from Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, rural schools have taken on a more dynamic and interactive role with their communities. These schools are involved in activites such as School Based Enterprise (Sher, 1977), community study, and school integrated service delivery. They also share similar assumptions:

- Rural America is a vital, national resource
- Solutions to rural problems are to be found in rural communities
- Education and community well-being are tightly linked
- Rural schools have the capacity to take on leadership roles in their communities
- All students have the capacity for creative, self-directed learning and responsible decision-making
- Experiential learning that focuses on the community produces greater benefits for the community, school, and the student than strictly school-centered learning
- Learning what is uniquely rural about one's community (history, culture, economics, and the social and political structures) is an empowering process
- Meaningful change occurs when all elements of the school and community work together

Instances of School-Community Collaboration

We have found many examples of schools collaborating with their communities to ensure that a variety and quality of service reflecting local and societal needs and responsibilities be provided to children and adults. These have ranged from general education to lifelong learning, from day-care programs to meals for the elderly, and from vocational training to small business development. For the purpose of illustration, we have organized our examples into three discrete, but overlapping categories. The first category we call School-Based Economic Development, the second area we call School as Community Center, and the third category is Community as Curriculum. Figure 5 visually portrays each category. The intersections indicate elements they share in common while the unique areas represent their individual primary emphasis.

Figure 5. Three Categories of School-Community Collaboration



School-Based Economic Development

This category is most notably represented by the writings of Jonathan Sher (1977) who pioneered the concept of School-Based Development Enterprise (SBDE). These ideas were implemented under the direction of Paul Delargy of Georgia State University in a program called REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning). REAL incorporates many of the ideas inherent in the neighborhood lemonade stand. Kids from

"Students research, plan, set up and operate their own enterprises in cooperation with their local high school or community college." (REAL, date unknown a, p. 3)

the neighborhood see the day is hot and reason that people will be thirsty. The children also know they are cute and friendly and everyone in the neighborhood has spare change. They also know which corners are safe and likely to attract the most business. Their market analysis and planning completed, the children secure the needed supplies from parents, and the lemonade stand opens for business. Although this illustration is quite simple, it does present several key elements of REAL: "Students research, plan, set up and operate their own enterprises in cooperation with their local high school or community college (REAL, date unknown a, p. 3).

Four primary goals underlie the REAL process:

1) **Institutional**: To help rural schools become effective small business incubators and community development organizations.

2) **Educational**: To help participants develop economic literacy, as well as skills in entrepreneurship and business management.

3) **Economic**: To help expand the local employment base by creating businesses that fill gaps in the rural economy.

4) **Individual**: To help rural students develop greater self-esteem, complete their schooling, and become productive citizens. (REAL, date unknown b, p.1)

REAL's roots have spread from North Carolina, Georgia, and South Carolina to the Northwest, where the program is being used in high schools in the states of Washington and Alaska.

REAL personnel point out that the program stresses an innovative, experiential approach to learning that occurs within the context of a local high school (and community college) and is not designed solely as a business development venture. Students learn many of the same things as students in traditional programs. However, REAL students go beyond basic academics into the development and application of entrepreneurial skills to a wide range of options chosen by students themselves:

> Students are welcome to choose any *form* of business--start-up ventures, franchises, purchase of an existing company, family businesses, micro-enterprises or home-based operations. They also are free to explore any *kind* of business--agricultural, service, manufacturing or retail . . . Students who want to use their entrepreneurial skills to create a needed community service or other worthwhile

> non-profit venture are encouraged to do so. They, too, count as REAL successes. (REAL, date unknown b, p. 5)

An important outcome that differentiates REAL from traditional high school programs is the emphasis on learning about one's community and putting something of value back into the community, whether it be a needed day-care program or a shoe repair business.

REAL has a demonstrated history of success. In the past ten years, about 15 businesses have been started by students. Some of these continue to make a profit; other have gone out of business. However, REAL is stronger today than ever, with substantial development grants from the Ford Foundation and support from a host of other organizations and businesses, all attesting to the benefits REAL Enterprises holds for rural communities.

School As Community Center

In small, rural communities, the school has always functioned as a community center and provided a meeting place and a social and cultural hub for community activities. However, it often does not go much beyond this role into such areas as health, nutrition, day care, and related social service delivery. In the mid '60s, a major community school movement emerged in Britain following the publication of the Plowden Report (1967). The report, which urged improved parent-school relations and the formation of the community school, was followed in the United States by legislation focusing on community education.

Early community education efforts in the United States primarily centered around recreational use of the school and adult education programs during non-school hours. In the mid-1970s, the concept of community school extended to encompass three general areas: "Making the curriculum more relevant," "Meeting the educational needs of the entire community," and "Effective use of social and governmental resources" (Minzey, 1976). Because of the crisis facing small, rural communities, this expanded concept appears more relevant than ever.

Ironically, even though this crisis impacts rural schools as hard as rural communities, the level of observable school activity appears minimal. For example, in a report for the Northwest Policy Center at the University of Washington, *Strategies for Rural Social Service Organization and Delivery* (Faas, et al., 1991), schools were not mentioned as a service delivery strategy. This is especially ironic when considering the fact that schools are one of the last elements of infrastructure left in many small, rural communities. They contain access to information through their library and media resources (and distance technology, in many cases), they house a high level of human capability, they are eligible

Ironically, even though this crisis impacts rural schools as hard as rural communities, the level of observable school activity appears minimal.

for various types of funding, and they are a large, centrally-located facility. Some schools and their communities recognize both the need and the capability that exists in using the school as a community center. Spears, Combs, and Bailey (1990), in their case studies of linkages between rural schools and their communities, present an example of such a school in York,.Nebraska, a town of about 8,300 residents.

York, Nebraska has operated a community schools program since the early 1970s. Initially, the program focused on adult and lifelong education. But in the late 1970s, program personnel felt that the negative impact of economic changes occurring in the country required a different approach. A resource council consisting of the director of the community education program; social service providers (hospitals, mental health, senior citizens groups, government programs, etc.); civic groups such as Lions, Scouts, PTA; church leaders; law enforcement; and news media was formed. The resource council served as a needs sensing and communication coordination group within the community.

The most promising direction for revitalization and survival rests with education and the linkages that can be developed and sustained between school and community.

Out of this group's discussions have emerged ideas that have become reality in York. Some of these include Meals on Wheels, a program that provides meals for the elderly and handicapped; Busy Wheels, which provides dependable and inexpensive transportation for the elderly and handicapped; and Before/After School Childcare, which provides childcare for school-age children.

The York experience is unique because it has survived for more than 16 years, and has continued to evolve with the changing needs of the community. Spears, et al. (1990) provide a cogent summary of the benefits accruing to the community:

> The conventional school environment is enriched as students see adults in learning roles, and teachers maintain closer connections with the real world through teaching both adults and young people. The community is enriched as school-community linkages enable adults to be more supportive of classroom learning and increased contact with young people encourage respect and acceptance across the generations. And finally, the young people themselves gain a realization that learning is indeed a lifelong process--a process they will be able to take with them no matter where they go. (p. 23)

Although not as comprehensive as the York experience, rural educators in the Northwest are beginning to see the vitally important role schools can have in serving their communities beyond basic education. In Rockland, Idaho, for example, the school has worked with the Southeast Idaho Council of Governments to provide meals for the elderly, provide childcare using home economics students, and provide community access to resource information via computers and distance technology. In Pilot Rock, Oregon, students, parents, and patrons established a community daycare program. In Burley, Idaho, cooperative efforts by children's services, law enforcement, courts, and schools have begun in order to provide a more integrated service to better meet the needs of students (Miller, in press b).

"Many American schools of today are as separated from their communities as if a moat existed between them and the rest of the environment." *Minzey, 1970*

What appears to be needed in order to enhance these fledgling efforts are teacher education programs designed to inform and train educators in community development, models, success stories, and networks of committed rural educators and community members upon which to build a local vision. The school's traditional role, that of being isolated to a task primarily focused on general education, limits the schools capacity for community collaboration and service. Minzey (1972), a leader in the community education movement of the 1970s, has harsh words for the traditional role of schools in American society:

> Many American schools of today are as separated from their communities as if a moat existed between them and the rest of the environment. . . School people have a good idea of what the role of the public schools should be. They resent being given a greater responsibility, and are opposed to outsiders using their buildings and their equipment. Boards of education, administrators, teachers, and custodians are often threatened by such suggested change as that implied by community education, and either actively or passively resist its implementation. (p. 77-78)

Minzey goes on to point out the advantages to be gained by the community school concept:

> The community must be brought into the school and the school must be taken into the community. This interweaving of school and community will tend to enhance both and result in a relationship which more effectively meets the goals of education. (p. 77)

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Schools and the Communities They Serve

by James S. Coleman

What do Tucker County, West Virginia, and Hyde Park in Chicago have in common? In telling us, Mr. Coleman also suggests ways to revitalize our schools, our neighborhoods, and our society.

SOME VARIATIONS among schools affect their operations, yet seldom play a part in school policies. I will examine one such crucial variation in this article. First, however, let me describe schools in two communities with which I am familiar, to give

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JAMES S. COLEMAN is a professor of sociology and education at the University of Chicago. An earlier version of this article was presented in September 1984 at a conference in celebration of the 140th anniversary of the founding of the School of Education that is now part of the State University of New York at Albany. The revision was aided by discussion at that conference and by comments from Robert Merton and Mary Alice Klein.

Illustration by Kevin Pope

These communities, and the schools that serve them, are the residue of a segment of America that now represents only a fraction of the country.

a sense of the kind of comparisons I plan to make.

The first community is in the heart of Appalachia. It lies in Tucker County, West Virginia, a rural and mountainous region largely covered by forest. The county has only one town of any size: Parsons, the county seat, population 1,937. Tucker County has one high school, one vocational high school, and several elementary schools.

I am most familiar with the community served by one of the elementary schools, a school with three teachers and five grades. The first and second grades are together under one teacher, grades 3 through 5 are together under another, and there is one head teacher — though the grade combinations vary each year, depending on the size of the age groups. The teachers live in the local community. Parents know them well, both directly and through the extended network of kinship, friendship, and work relationships that pervades each of the communities served by the school and connects these communities.

The fathers of some of the children work in the mines; some have farms (not productive enough to make a living), which they combine with other jobs, such as driving a school bus; some are engaged in such community services as operating a gas station and general store or delivering mail. In Parsons, the county seat, the jobs are more diversified — insurance agent, barber, bank teller, state or county employee. Some of the men receive unemployment compensation, and a few families are on welfare; until the mines reopened a few years ago, many more were. One man, who had children late in life by an Indian woman he brought back from Mexico, draws disability compensation for injuries suffered in the mines. A number of the older men in the community receive black lung compensation.

Because many of the fathers work near home and because the men often work around the house, yard, and garden, they see their children a lot when the children are not in school. They sometimes play with the younger children, but the form of interaction changes when the children reach age 8 or 10. The fathers' activities are physical and often outdoors, and the boys (and some of the girls) tag along. The boys often emulate their fathers, whether riding four-wheelers or motorcycles, drinking beer, trying to chew tobacco, or hunting raccoons.

Most of the mothers do not work outside the home, but some do, in the local shoe factory or in clerical jobs in the county seat. Many of the grandparents of schoolchildren live in the community, as do many of their aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relatives. Few parents have gone beyond high school, and many never completed high school. Most of the children will not go beyond high school, but some will — and most of those who do so will leave the county because of the absence of work other than the sorts of jobs described above. Thus depleted, the next generation that remains in Tucker County will continue to consist primarily of high school graduates and dropouts.

The weekly newspaper published in the county seat usually contains extended news about children in school: competitions for queen of the county fair and for homecoming queen and for the queen's court (which includes grade school children), or football games, or car accidents involving local teenagers, or accounts of local boys' scrapes with the law.

These communities in Tucker County, and the schools that serve them, are the residue of a segment of rural America that now represents only a tiny fraction of the country.

THE SECOND community is also unusual, though in many respects it could hardly be more different from the one I've just described. This community is Hyde Park-Kenwood, which surrounds the University of Chicago. Nearly three-fourths of the faculty members of the university live in Hyde Park or Kenwood, within a mile of the university. Many walk or ride bicycles to work; those who come by car drive only a few blocks.

The Hyde Park community has several public elementary schools, three private schools (two of them affiliated with religious groups), and one university laboratory school. There is a single large public high school and a private high school, the laboratory school. I am most familiar with the laboratory elementary school and will focus on it.

This school, with three or four classes per grade level, is larger than the one in Tucker County. Many of the teachers live in Hyde Park or Kenwood, and some are affiliated with the university community. Some parents know their children's teachers outside school, but most do not. They do know them by reputation, through the extended network of friendship, neighborhood, and work relations that binds Hyde Park and Kenwood. Kinship networks are largely missing, though there are examples of family "dynasties" with

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Figure 1

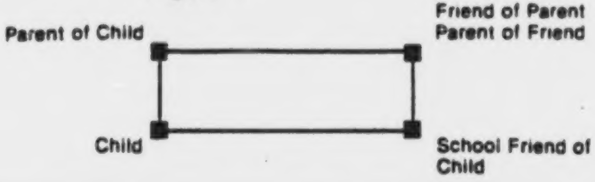
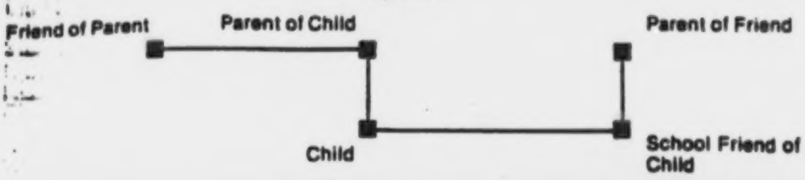


Figure 2



Most public schools in the United States differ sharply from these two schools and are becoming more different all the time.

members involved in University of Chicago schools through virtually their whole lives. The most prominent are Edward and Julian Levi, brothers who were first enrolled in the laboratory nursery school and who have recently retired as president of the university and professor of law at the university.

One or both parents of most children in the lab school work at the university, either as faculty or staff members. Younger children are often brought to school on foot by fathers or mothers on their way to work at the university. Others live in Hyde Park (or adjacent Kenwood) and are connected to the university community only by friendship relations and neighborhood associations. A few live outside the Hyde Park-Kenwood area and are not connected to these networks at all.

More of the lab school mothers than the Tucker County mothers are employed outside the home, many at the university. The lack of an extensive network of kinship relations means that there are few family gatherings at which gossip flows about children, teachers, and school; but there are many social gatherings at which such gossip flows.

Nearly all the students at the lab school will go on to college, and many will obtain advanced degrees. A few of those will remain in the community, but most will leave. In contrast to the residents in the Tucker County communities, their families will be succeeded by others from outside the community, similar in education and lifestyle but geographically mobile.

AN INCIDENT in each of these two schools will facilitate further comparisons.

Event 1. On the first day of school in Tucker County, a fourth-grader reported to her mother that her sister (a first-grader who is shy and verbally backward) cried most of the time, and that the head teacher, Mrs. X, yelled at her, which made her cry even more. The mother called the first-grade teacher and asked her about it, then called two friends and talked to them about Mrs. X.

The next day, the fourth-grader reported that much the same thing had happened. Again, the mother talked to friends about the events. On the third day the mother went to the school, confronted Mrs. X, and discussed her first-grade daughter. By the weekend, the daughter seemed to have accepted school; she had stopped crying, and Mrs. X had stopped yelling. Nevertheless, at a barbecue on Saturday of that week, most of the gossip among the mother and three other women (two whose children had attended the school and one whose child would enter school the next year) was about the school and the teacher — with occasional remarks from one of the men, who knew and didn't like Mrs. X's husband.

Event 2. Last spring, a faculty member at the University of Chicago realized that his son, who was then in nursery school, was due to be placed in one of the lab school kindergarten classes. He talked to a colleague in his department, who said vehemently, "Don't let him be put in Mrs. A's class. She is terrible for boys who don't do just what she expects." The colleague's son had had that same teacher and had adjusted to school only after being moved to another class. When the father spoke to a second colleague whose two sons had attended the school, he heard a similar story about Mrs. A.

Then the mother talked to some friends and heard a slightly different story about Mrs. A: that she was strict, demanding, and not good for children (especially boys) whose progress was slow. The parents then talked at length to Mrs. B, their son's nursery-school teacher, who had followed the progress of many of her former students in Mrs. A's classes. They also talked to other nursery-school parents whose children were friends of their son. Based on Mrs. B's comments, the set of parents decided collectively to have their children placed in Mrs. A's class. The friends all began kindergarten in Mrs. A's class — but their parents remained especially attentive because of the warnings they had heard.

I could list additional events, but these two are sufficient to introduce the explicit comparisons I wish to make. I am suggesting that — despite the enormous differences between these two communities, between the probable futures of the children who live in them, and between the schools that serve them — there are strong similarities. I also wish to suggest that most public schools in the United States differ sharply from these two schools and are becoming more different all the time.

WHAT MAKES these two schools similar and distinguishes them from most U.S. schools is the strength of the functional communities they serve. The Tucker County school serves a functional community built around kinship, residence, church, and work. The Hyde Park school serves a functional community built primarily around work and residence.

Perhaps the most important property of these functional communities (for my purposes here) can, without too much distortion, be expressed in a single sentence: *A child's friends and associates in school are sons and daughters of friends and associates of the child's parents.* This property is expressed in Figure 1. In contrast, a diagram representing the *absence* of a functional community that spans generations (Figure 2) does not show this kind of closure.

The two events I described, involving the Tucker County first-grader and the Hyde Park kindergartner, make it evident that something very like the type of closure shown in Figure 1 was critical to the actions taken by the parents. Without the closure, in a social structure like that shown in Figure 2, the Tucker County mother would not have had the information that reinforced her views and encouraged her to go to the school and talk to the head teacher. She would have been forced to rely on her individual resources, and for most parents these are not sufficiently strong to impel actions of the sort she took. The intimidation of the school is far too strong.

The diagram is not precisely accurate in the Tucker County case, since some of the friends on whom the mother depended were not parents of friends of her daughter, but parents whose children had been in the same social context — in the same school with the same teacher. The same holds true in the second example: the two colleagues with whom the Hyde Park father discussed the kindergarten teachers were not parents of his son's friends, but parents whose sons had been exposed to those teachers.

Nevertheless, with this minor caveat, the general principle stands. In these functional communities, the social structure characteristic of parents and children exhibits *intergenerational closure* of the sort shown in Figure 1. In school settings not embedded in functional communities, the social structure of the community fails to exhibit such closure, thus cutting off the information flow that strengthens and supports parents in their school-related activities. Information flow of the sort exhibited in these events is not the only — nor perhaps even the most important — type of feedback or support provided to the parent by a functional community with closure of the sort shown in Figure 1. In such a community, the parent need not depend only on the child for information about the child's behavior, both in and out of school. The parent has additional channels: through the friends and acquaintances of the child, then to the parents of those children, and back to the parent. The parent has an informal network of sentinels — each imperfect but, taken together, capable of providing a rich store of information about the child's behavior and even capable of exercising discipline in lieu of the parent. In the absence of this closure, the last link of the feedback chain is missing, and there are no sentinels on whom the parent can rely. The child's behavior can remain unnoticed and unattended by adults whom the parent knows, and the parent is again unsupported — in negotiations not with the school but with the child.

A social structure with closure facilitates the development of reputations; in a structure without closure, reputations are nonexistent.

It may well be this consequence of the decline of intergenerational closure — the inability of a community of parents to establish and enforce norms of behavior for their children — that has made schools so difficult to govern in recent years. If so, the prognosis for school administration is not good, for the decline shows no sign of reversal.

Another consequence of closure within the functional community is the possibilities it creates for personal relations between a child and an adult other than the child's parents. In Tucker County, a grandfather may help his grandson raise a calf for 4-H, or a man whose own sons are grown may introduce his neighbor's son to the complexities of trapping. There is no shortage of youth leaders. In Hyde Park, there is less such interest, but there is some. A faculty member will hire a colleague's teenage daughter or son as a research assistant, or a runner whom a faculty member knows at the fieldhouse will teach his friend's son about training to become a competitive runner.

In a structure without closure (Figure 2), a child's principal relations with adults are — except for teachers — with his or her own parents. There is little reason for another adult to take an avuncular interest in the child's friends. Indeed, any such interest is suspect, given the potential for exploitation, sexual or otherwise.

Throughout American society, there has been for some years a decline in the number of volunteer youth leaders (e.g., scoutmasters or boys and girls club leaders); currently, there is increased alarm about sexual exploitation of children by adults. If my analysis is correct, both of these phenomena are a consequence of the decline of functional communities with intergenerational closure.

It is also important to point out some other consequences of functional communities characterized by a social structure with intergenerational closure — but consequences that are inimical to equality of opportunity. A social structure with closure facilitates the development of *reputations*; in a structure without closure, reputations are nonexistent. And in a social structure with intergenerational closure, there is the *inheritance* of reputation. An example from Tucker County illustrates this well. The man with the Mexican-Indian wife and the back injury from working in the mines, whom I'll call Jack, had a reputation as a ne'er-do-well. He lived with his wife and two children in a two-room shack surrounded by broken-down cars. His children went to school, of course, though they very likely did not receive much support and encouragement at home. And because everyone knew the father, that is, because of the intergenerational closure of the community, the father's reputation descended to his son.

The son left school early, got a girl pregnant, and has moved with her into a trailer. He's something of a hell-raiser and appears likely to turn out like his father. It is difficult to know to what extent the son's career in school and since is due to his home environment and to what extent his inherited reputation itself had an impact within the school. But suppose for a moment that Jack and his wife, while otherwise no different, had provided an exemplary environment for doing homework and fulfilling school requirements. The reputation would still have been inherited by the son, and it would still have been a difficult impediment to overcome.

This kind of inheritance of reputation exists to a lesser extent in Hyde Park, both because the community has less intergenerational closure and because of egalitarian values held by many Hyde Park residents. Yet the feedback channels do exist, and there is some inheritance of reputation — more than in a suburb characterized by anomie. As a result, some children go through school with a subtle advantage. A child of a distinguished professor inherits a portion of the parent's reputation, a legacy that the child of an ordinary member of the community lacks.

This impediment to equal opportunity is not a new one; indeed, it has been documented in studies such as *Middletown*, by Robert and Helen Lynd (1929) and *Elmtown's Youth*, by A.B. Hollingshead (1949). What has *not* been generally noted is that the inheritance of reputation depends on a social structure with intergenerational closure, that such structures also bring benefits, and that such structures are vanishing from U.S. society. (Richard Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy* [1957], an examination of working-class neighborhoods in the urban North of England, is one of the few who has documented the benefits of this closure.)

Indeed, some of the benefits of these social structures are particularly important for disadvantaged children. One of the major changes that rural migrants to city ghettos or slums experience is the loss of the functional community that has aided in disciplining their children and keeping them out of trouble. Such a loss is especially severe for families with meager economic and personal resources. Jack's son, for instance, may have been branded by his father's reputation, but he has also been kept out of some trouble by community sanctions that would be missing in modern urban or suburban areas.

More generally, we might conjecture that the strong collective resources provided by communities with intergenerational closure (whether in ethnic urban neighborhoods or in rural areas) were important for the extraordinary social and intellectual development that occurred in the first half of the 20th century among Americans whose parents had few personal resources. Today, a variety of changes have broken that closure. Consequently, the two schools I've described (one public and one private) and the functional communities surrounding them are atypical.

Though functional communities built on a residential base have largely vanished, the public schools continue to be organized on a residential base.

To be sure, some communities have many of the characteristics I have attributed to functional communities, but many forces act to weaken them. Most fathers work outside the communities in which their children attend school, and an increasing number of mothers do also. Friends and associates are increasingly drawn from the workplace rather than from the neighborhood. Work- and residence-based ties have been eroded, as the men who were once their foundation have gone to work outside the community. Neighborhood-based associations are weakened, as the women who were once their foundation enter the labor force. Geographic mobility reduces the proximity of grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins in the lives of children.

School policies at all levels — federal, state, and local — have also weakened the community in which the school is embedded. These policies have included school consolidation (designed to introduce "efficiencies of scale") and those kinds of school desegregation that have been explicitly designed to break the neighborhood/school connection. Policies of increasing school size and reducing school grade-spans have had similar effects.

The overall impact of all of these changes, some technological in origin and some political, has been to destroy the networks of relations that once existed in geographic neighborhoods and linked these neighborhoods to the schools within them.

RESIDENTIAL PROXIMITY AND FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITIES

The functional communities that once existed in the U.S., communities within which public schools were embedded, were defined geographically. They were *neighborhoods*, characterized by rich textures of interpersonal relations and by the kind of intergenerational closure that is still found in Tucker County and, to a lesser extent, in Hyde Park. But, though functional communities built on a residential base have largely vanished, the public schools continue to be organized on a residential base.

Some private schools in the U.S. are created by functional communities that are not residentially based. Most of these schools are religious, but some, like the University of Chicago Laboratory School, have a different institutional base.

A smaller number of private schools, largely concentrated in the Northeast, have traditionally been based on functional communities defined by a geographically dispersed but socially connected social elite. Many of these schools no longer have this closure; instead, they are attended by children whose parents are not only geographically dispersed but also have no functional connection. Thus it may be that, though some private schools exhibit higher levels of intergenerational closure than can be found in public schools, others exhibit the very lowest levels of closure.

However, much opposition to private schooling has been based on the exclusionary and separatist consequences of intergenerational closure not based on residential communities. The ideology of the common public school has been based on the premise that a school serving a residentially defined community provides a much more democratic and socially integrating form of intergenerational closure — bringing together children of different religions, different social classes, different ethnic groups, and thereby bringing their families closer together — than does a school serving a community based on ethnic, religious, or social-elitist connections.

In general, this premise has been a sound one. In recent years, however, the residential community has ceased to be a functional community except in such unusual instances as Tucker County or Hyde Park. Furthermore, the separation of work and residence has destroyed the democratic and integrating character of schools based on residential proximity. Residential areas are quite homogeneous both in income and in race.

THE RECENCY and gradualness of the demise of residential communities as functional communities have generally obscured the fact that functional communities are an important social resource, not least because of the possibility they create for intergenerational closure, connecting communities of adults to communities of children. Thus social policy persists in opposing schools serving communities based on anything but residence, on much the same grounds as in the past. There is little recognition of the important fact that breaking down the intergenerational closure of non-residence-based communities does not lead to more democratic and integrated functional communities, but to racially and economically homogeneous schools without the strength that can be provided by an adult functional community.

The issue of the organization of education, then, has come to be a different one than in the past. The issue now is whether the benefits of intergenerational closure provided by schools serving non-geographically-defined communities outweigh the separatist tendencies inherent in such communities. Or, to put it differently, the issue is whether the value of this social resource — the intergenerational closure provided by schools serving functional communities — is sufficiently great to outweigh the costs of such schools to broader social assimilation.

A NEW RANGE OF POLICIES

The general decline of functional communities in American society and the loss of intergenerational closure that has attended this decline make the question of how best to organize education much more difficult to resolve than when functional communities were abundant. Once the issue is seen in the context in which I have presented it here, then a broader range of policies in the organization of education becomes evident. It may be possible to organize schools so that the social costs brought about by technological change are mitigated without reimposing all the costs that resulted from our old social structures.

Some institutions designed to strengthen intergenerational closure have long existed. Parent/Teacher Associations certainly have this aim. In some cases, they are able to reinstitute links between parents that afford a degree of intergenerational closure. In many cases, however, parents have too few daily, informal contacts to sustain these links. Some principals and teachers have attempted to bring together parents for ad hoc meetings when an issue or crisis arises in the school (e.g., drug abuse or suicide). Crises of this sort can sometimes establish ties between parents that persist, even in the absence of regular contact. Thus school crises, if they mobilize parents in any collective fashion, can leave as residue a set of relations that aid the school, the parents, and their children in the future.

The fact that intense common experiences create enduring ties suggests other possible policies. Some private schools (and, less often, public schools) use events sponsored by parents as a means of raising money; this type of event can strengthen parental links. Recognizing this, school administrators can initiate events and activities designed specifically to bring together parents of children in the school. Many administrators know that, by creating collective strength among parents, they create a force that can be a nuisance; less often do they recognize that this collective strength can be a resource that both eases their task of governing a school and benefits the children who attend it.

There are more fundamental changes that can help achieve intergenerational closure. The most direct approach would be to reopen the question of organizing publicly supported schools by residential proximity. As I have indicated above, the assumptions on which that model of school organization is based no longer hold, except in isolated instances outside metropolitan areas. Yet the pattern of school organization continues to exist.

When that question is reopened, one way of answering it would be to search for those functional communities that still remain in the highly individualistic society that the United States has become. Religious association continues to be a basis for functional communities for some, for whom religious observance, religious affiliation, and activities related to religion are important enough to play a part in everyday life. For some of these persons, private schools run by their religious groups create intergenerational closure. This suggests a reexamination of the uniquely American policy of refusing public support for privately organized schools.

Another basis for functional communities for much broader sets of adults is the workplace of either or both parents. Increasingly, adults' friends are drawn from the workplace rather than from the neighborhood. It follows that a natural way to reestablish intergenerational closure is to organize schools by workplaces. (The University of Chicago Laboratory School is an illustration; however, that school exists only because the university performs research and teaching related to education.) Schools based at the workplaces of parents, whether in a steel mill or in an office building downtown, constitute a sharp departure from neighborhood-based schools. But this model has the potential to partially reconstitute the intergenerational community that no longer exists in the neighborhood and, furthermore, to cut across racial and economic lines.

The changes in school policy that I have suggested indicate some of the ways in which school reorganization might help to reunite the communities of children and youth with the adult community. These are not the only possible policy changes. Yet they serve to open these questions for discussion, so that we may examine potential ways of reconstituting intergenerational closure without reintroducing the social costs that have traditionally accompanied it.

Schools have long been based on the premise of strong families and strong functional communities of families. Now that the functional communities of neighborhood have withered and families themselves are increasingly fragile, it may be that the goals of schools can best be aided by policies that build upon and strengthen those links that exist among families. □

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Schools Reaching Out

Family, School, and Community Partnerships For Student Success

In working toward new definitions and practices of parent involvement, Mr. Davies notes, members of the League of Schools Reaching Out will be moving toward realizing the ideal embodied in an old African saying: "The whole village educates the child."

BY DON DAVIES

HOW IMPORTANT is involving parents in the schools – particularly in urban schools? Is it a part of the mainstream movement to reform and restructure American schools, or is it a sideshow? As it is traditionally defined and practiced, parent involvement is not powerful enough to have a significant impact on the policies and practices of urban schools. In fact, an emphasis on traditional parent involvement can divert attention from the fact that schools and families have inadequately promoted the academic and social success of some children. But, if its definitions and practices are redefined, parent involvement can make a powerful contribution to efforts to reform urban schools and to achieve our national

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aim of providing a successful school experience for all children of all backgrounds and circumstances.

NEW APPROACHES TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In recent years progress toward redefining parent involvement and linking it to school reform has been made on several fronts. James Comer, a Yale University psychiatrist, and his colleagues in several states have been working to reform schools that serve poor and minority children. Comer believes that, for these schools to be effective, parents must play a major role in all aspects of school life, particularly management and governance. He insists on the importance of fostering teacher/student/parent relationships in a democratic setting, and he emphasizes that teachers, families, and specialists must work together to promote the social and emotional as well as the academic growth of children.[1]

Henry Levin's accelerated schools model, first applied in San Francisco and in Redwood City, California, and now being expanded to a network of schools across the country, sets specific achievement goals for all children to meet by the end of the elementary years. Levin emphasizes comprehensive changes in curriculum, instruction, organization, and school management, with parents playing central roles both as resource people and as decision makers.[2]

Through many studies and a multischool project in Baltimore and other cities, Joyce Epstein has developed and is testing a model of school and family connections that consists of five types of involvement: 1) the basic obligations of parenting (responsibility for children's health, safety, supervision, discipline, guidance, and learning at home); 2) the basic obligation of schools to communicate with the home; 3) the involvement of parents at school as volunteers, supporters, and spectators at school events and student performances; 4) parent involvement in learning activities at home – facilitated by Epstein's program, Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork; and 5) parent involvement in school decision making, governance, and advocacy. A sixth kind of connection is under investigation for its contribution to school/family relations: collaboration and exchanges between schools and community organizations, agencies, and businesses. Epstein emphasizes the concept of overlapping spheres of influence and responsibility.[3]

Dorothy Rich's Home and School Institute sponsors projects in several school districts that assist parents in fostering children's learning at home.[4] And David Seeley has made important contributions to redefining parent involvement to encompass a wide range of family/school/community/learner partnerships.[5]

The "family support" movement has several well-known advocates at major university research centers, including Edward Zigler and Sharon Lynn Kagan of the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale, Heather Weiss of the Family Research Project at Harvard, and Moncrieff Cochran and his colleagues at Cornell. Family support programs, aimed at strengthening all aspects of the child's development, stress parent education at home and help parents connect with natural support systems. Many of the programs have links with school systems or early education programs, stimulated by the success of Missouri's statewide Parents as Teachers program. All of these efforts are, in part, responses to social changes that have left today's parents with less access to help and advice than parents of earlier generations had through extended families and close-knit communities.[6]

Each of the scholars and projects mentioned above is distinctive. Most have their own orthodoxies, and some have become the equivalent of brand names. But the commonalities outweigh the differences and add up to a new definition of what has usually been called "parent involvement." Three common themes are of central importance:

1. *Providing success for all children.* All children can learn and can achieve school success. None should be labeled as likely failures because of the social, economic, or racial characteristics of their families or communities.

2. *Serving the whole child.* Social, emotional, physical, and academic growth and development are inextricably linked. To foster cognitive and academic development, all other facets of development must also be addressed by schools, by families, and by other institutions that affect the child.

3. *Sharing responsibility.* The social, emotional, physical, and academic development of the child is a shared and overlapping responsibility of the school, the family, and other community agencies and institutions. In order to promote the social and academic development of children, the key institutions must change their practices and their relationships with one another.

SCHOOLS REACHING OUT

The Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) used these three themes as keynotes for a national project called Schools Reaching Out. The project, supported by five foundations (Leon Lowenstein, JM, Aaron Diamond, the *Boston Globe*, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundations), set as its purpose to redefine and expand parent involvement as a part of urban school reform.

The project began two years ago with two demonstration schools: the David A. Ellis Elementary School in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and P.S. 111 on the West Side of Manhattan. It has expanded into the League of Schools Reaching Out, with a current membership of 41 elementary and middle schools in 19 urban school districts in 13 states and Puerto Rico. The league subscribes to no single orthodoxy, but its members share a commitment to the three themes sketched above. The league schools will be considering issues raised in seven reports written by researchers for the project, who gathered data not only in the two demonstration schools but also in other member schools.[7] The schools are starting to put together new and broader definitions of parent involvement.

- The new definitions go beyond the term *parent*, which is too narrow to describe today's reality. *Family* is a more encompassing term. The most significant adults in the lives of many children may be grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, or even neighbors who provide child care.

- The new definitions go beyond parents or families to include all of the community agencies and institutions that serve children. Urban families need support and assistance – particularly those under stress because of economic hardship, the struggle to find adequate housing, or barriers of language and social custom. Urban schools also need support and assistance to understand families, and communities can contribute a great deal to children's academic and social development.

- The new definitions go beyond having family members come to the school. Activities and services include those that occur at home and in neighborhood settings as well.
- The new definitions include not only those parents who readily respond to teacher and school initiatives but also the families that schools consider "hard to reach." The latter group (which in some schools encompasses a majority of families) includes those who lack the energy, time, self-confidence, or English-language proficiency to take part in traditional parent involvement activities, as well as those who are fearful of schools because of past experiences or cultural norms. In most schools, activities that fit the old definitions of parent involvement engage only a relatively small number of parents, who provide leadership and service and who are aware of the advantages of such involvement to themselves and their own children. And, of course, it is their children who benefit the most.
- The new definitions go beyond the agendas and priorities of teachers and school administrators to include the priorities of families themselves, and they extend beyond specifically academic activities to include all the contributions that families make to the education of their children.
- The new definitions of parent involvement in urban schools replace the old "deficit" views of the pathologies, traumas, and troubles of urban families and communities with a new mindset that emphasizes the inherent strengths of families. Improving the capacity of urban families to foster the social and academic growth of their children means building on the strengths of those families and of their diverse, multicultural communities. Cultural differences are not diseases to be treated but healthy opportunities for learning. The new definitions recognize that all families can be more effective in all aspects of child-rearing.

The League of Schools Reaching Out invites schools to choose among the brand-name approaches to building school/family/community relationships and to improving schools or to mix and match these and others with their own inventions to create new models — as long as these models focus on helping all children (not just some of them) succeed and on using family and community interventions and partnerships to help reach this goal. The new definitions should take the league schools beyond the traditional view of "parent involvement" as a desirable end in itself and move them toward involvement as a means of improving school outcomes, particularly the academic achievement and social success of children.

THE NEW DEFINITIONS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN SCHOOLS EMPHASIZE THE INHERENT STRENGTHS OF FAMILIES.

I do not claim that the path of shared responsibility and partnerships is the *only* valid approach to reforming and restructuring schools. League members have worked with the IRE to search for practices that work. The schools will help one another understand, develop, and test new strategies that give practical meaning to the general concepts of providing success for all, serving the whole child, and sharing responsibility.

From the work accomplished thus far in the Schools Reaching Out project, I propose a three-part strategy for league schools and for other schools that want to move toward partnership. Three ideas that were found to work in the demonstration elementary schools of this project can be adapted to almost any school without necessarily waiting for the central office to invest heavily in parent involvement or to begin the process of systemwide restructuring. They are: 1) the parent center, 2) home visitors, and 3) action research teams of teachers.

THE PARENT CENTER

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot got it right: "The presence of parents can transform the culture of a school." At the Ellis School in Boston, the parent center — a room for parents — was a low-cost success. Some of the project's researchers said that the school was "a different place" because the parent center existed. It made possible the substantial, continuing, and positive physical presence of family members in the school. The tone and content of school conversations about parents and their communities change when parents are physically present in the building. It is difficult for school employees to say, "The parents just don't care," when caring parents can be seen daily.

Staffing the center were two paid coordinators (both of them parents of children in the school), as well as a number of unpaid volunteers. Parent visitors dropped in for coffee, a chat, and information; the center also sponsored English-as-a-second-language (ESL) and General Education Development (GED) classes for parents. Parents reported feeling more positive about the school and about being involved in their children's education because they had a welcoming "place of their own" in the school.

School administrators and teachers used the center as a resource. For example, through the parent center they could reach a mother whose child was in emotional distress, make arrangements for a school open house, order teaching materials, or offer comfort to children in moments of crisis.

Ellis School provides good examples of the kinds of specific activities in which a parent center might be involved. About 150 of the school's 350 families were directly reached by parent center activities during the year. The Ellis center:

- offered ESL and GED classes — both requested by parents and both well-attended;
- organized grade-level breakfasts that

brought together teachers, administrators, and family members to talk informally and in a nonthreatening atmosphere about curriculum, grade-level objectives, and classroom concerns;

- sponsored breakfasts for fathers, designed to bring male family members to the school to discuss the contributions that men can make to children's motivation and academic interests;
- served as an escort and referral service for dozens of parents who needed help in dealing with social service, housing, and health agencies;
- organized a clothing exchange and a school store-on-a-cart;
- organized a small library of books and toys for children; and
- recruited parent volunteers requested by teachers.

What are the requirements for a workable parent center? Based on our experience at Ellis, the requirements are simple.

1. *A physical space*. At Ellis, the center was located in a small classroom.
2. *Adult-sized tables and chairs*. At Ellis, there was also an old but comfortable sofa that someone had donated.
3. *A paid staff of parents*. At Ellis, there were two part-time coordinators, paid $10 per hour; at least one of them was present from just before school started in the morning until the school building closed at 4 p.m. Project funds paid for the staff salaries, but Chapter 1 funds can be used for parent workers, as can other state and federal funds.
4. *A telephone*. A phone is a low-cost but crucial piece of equipment to encourage school/family/community connections. At Ellis, the center's telephone was one of only two in the building and thus served as a magnet that drew teachers to the center.
5. *A coffee pot, a hot plate, and occasional snacks*. It is generally agreed that food eases conversation, sharing, and conviviality.

A parent center can be organized in any school. The cost is low: money from Chapter 1 and other special programs can be used, or small grants from local businesses or foundations may be obtained. The school district must provide – and protect – the space. A parent center is a useful way to encourage the sharing of responsibility for children's education.

HOME VISITORS

Family support programs and research on families with children in the elementary and middle grades have shown that families of all socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups want to learn more about how to help their children learn and succeed. What families do (rather than what demographic groups they fall into) affects children's learning. Behaviors linked to children's success include parents' positive reinforcement of children's academic efforts, supervision of homework, and reading, talking, and telling stories.

Since most families want to help their children learn and since family help is a positive factor in children's learning, schools should reach out to families in homes and in neighborhood settings to provide information, materials, and guidance to that large constituency that does not come to the school. A home visitor program, the second successful element in the demonstration elementary schools in the Schools Reaching Out project, makes this service possible. At Ellis School, a home visitor program reached about 75 families that had little other contact with the school and that said they would welcome such visitors.

Who were the home visitors? The school recruited and trained four women residents of the community who had experience in such community work as adult education, counseling, or the care and education of young children. They were paid $10 an hour, and they visited four to five families a week.

What did they do? They were not social workers or truant officers. They provided information to families about school expectations, the curriculum, rules, and requirements, and they dispensed advice and materials on how family members could help children with their schoolwork. They reinforced the school's Raise a Reader program, in which parents were encouraged to read regularly to their children at home. The home visitors also provided information and referrals on topics ranging from housing and health services to summer camps and childrearing. They listened to family members' concerns and heard about their needs and interests, which they in turn conveyed to the teachers. The home visitors met with groups of teachers, many of whom treated them like colleagues and joined them in discussing strategies for helping with homework, dealing with parents' questions about schoolwork, and fostering children's language development.

There are a few requirements for a home visitor program.

1. A new definition of parent involvement is needed that is not limited to traditional parent activities in the school building. In addition, families must be viewed not as deficient but as sources of strength.
2. Funds are needed to pay the home visitors. As long as a program's focus is on improving student achievement, as it is in the Schools Reaching Out project, the school should be able to use Chapter 1 funds or funds for bilingual education for this purpose.
3. Training must be provided to the home visitors. Colleges, universities, and social service agencies are likely to have staff members who are interested in the program and who are willing to provide several hours of training so that home visitors can have a clear view of their responsibilities and the essential skills they need to help families help their children succeed.
4. A modest amount of supervision and support is needed. The principal, a Chapter 1 or bilingual teacher, or the coordinator of the parent center must oversee the program and supervise the home visitors.
5. Administrators and teachers must be willing to communicate with the home visitors so that their work in students' homes will be closely linked to classroom and school objectives.

Given such modest requirements, just about every urban school should be able to implement this practice. Through home visits, many families that are not linked to the school can be engaged in a collaborative effort to boost the chances for their children to succeed.

ACTION RESEARCH TEAMS

The third successful innovation in our demonstration elementary schools was the establishment of action research teams to involve teachers directly in studying home/school/community relations and in devising actions to improve their own practices. School/family/community partnerships will amount to little more than empty rhetoric unless teachers help design the partnerships, are devoted to making them work, and eventually find themselves benefiting from them.

Some approaches to parent involvement, such as the parent center and the home visitor program, engage parents and paraprofessionals. But without teacher participation, the partnership idea is seriously incomplete. The action research teams of teachers operate on the assumption that change and improvement in schools are most likely to occur when there are opportunities for teachers to work together collegially, with time for reflection and with support for trying new strategies. In both Ellis School and P.S. 111, Jean Krasnow found that "the process of enabling teacher researchers [to work] together in small problem-solving groups, using action research techniques, may be an innovation that in itself produces new thinking and reflection in the school."[3]

What are the features of this strategy? In both of the demonstration schools a researcher/facilitator organized a group of four teachers who met at least monthly. After doing some background reading in parent involvement and undergoing other training activities, the action research team in each school interviewed the rest of the faculty to determine how teachers felt about parents and parent involvement, what past activities had been successful (or not successful) in involving parents, and what concerns teachers had about increasing parent involvement. The studies uncovered some of the inevitable ambivalence and tensions that surround the idea of parent involvement – mixed feelings that are always present but often not dealt with by teachers.

JUST ABOUT ANY SCHOOL, URBAN OR NOT, CAN APPLY THE THREE-PART STRATEGY OF THE SCHOOLS REACHING OUT PROGRAM.

The teams used the results of the interviews to design several projects aimed at increasing collaboration between the school and its families. One of the projects, called Raise a Reader, bought children's books – as well as cloth to make tote bags in which primary students could carry books to and from school. The action research team also came up with the idea of awarding a series of minigrants (each totaling $150 to $200) to teachers who were not on the team to encourage them to reach out to families in a variety of ways that would enhance children's learning. This strategy produced a number of imaginative activities at little cost.

The research teams and the minigrants were teacher-controlled, nonbureaucratic mechanisms. Each teacher on a team received a stipend of between $400 and $600 – a modest amount but a concrete acknowledgment of a professional effort.

Action research teams of teachers require just a few changes in a school and its staff.

1. At least a small number of teachers must be willing to engage in the process of improving parent involvement.

2. Funds for small grants or stipends to teachers are necessary. These may be available from a local source.

3. A researcher/facilitator who is sensitive to teacher concerns can help teachers write proposals, design interviews, analyze and write up results, and lead discussions that will encourage reflection. There might be teachers or administrators already on a school's staff who understand the process well enough to serve as facilitators. A local university would be a good place to look for a volunteer or a low-cost facilitator – a faculty member or a graduate student could use the activity as a research opportunity. Another possible source of expertise is a school district's central office staff. Volunteers might also come from a local corporation, a community organization, or a senior citizens center.

Some schools in the League of Schools Reaching Out are considering modifying the concept of action research to include parents as members of the research teams. The assumption is that bringing parents and teachers together to study problems of home/school relations will be beneficial to a school's overall plan of sharing responsibility.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The potential of a parent involvement program will be enhanced if it is treated as an integrated strategy with three distinct features: a means of attracting family members to the school (the parent center); a means of reaching families at home (the home visitors); and a clearly supported, teacher-controlled way of engaging teachers in improving curriculum and instruction through the creation of new kinds of connections with parents and other community resources (the action research team).

Just about any school, urban or not, can apply the three-part strategy of the Schools Reaching Out program. The costs are relatively low, and schools may be able to use outside funds, such as those from Chapter 1, to cover a large portion of the expense. No "superstar" principals or teachers are required.

Just about any school can arrange for parents, teachers, and administrators to participate together in planning, decision making, and governance. The laboratory school in New York, P.S. 111, developed an effective School/Community

Planning and Policy Council, which included parents and representatives of the community and became a strong asset to the school's outreach efforts. The council linked those efforts to the overall school improvement plan, which focused on strengthening teaching and the curriculum in the language arts. Such councils may help pave the way for more fully developed school-based management.

No school's outreach strategy will be complete – conceptually or politically – until educators and parents learn how shared decision making can help them "put it all together." Most past efforts toward school-based decision making have been a disappointment. Such disappointment is likely to continue unless collaborative approaches to governance – like other forms of outreach – are integrated into an overall school restructuring effort that encompasses all aspects of school life.

LEADERSHIP

In any school – including those in the League of Schools Reaching Out – leadership is essential if a school staff is to choose the partnership approach to school reform and to develop an understanding of the basic concepts of providing success for all children, serving the whole child, and sharing responsibility. However, these concepts are still radical in most urban schools. The choice to move in the direction suggested by this article – and by others in this issue of the *Kappan* – should be made by a broad spectrum of the constituents in a school and its community, not just by the principal. However, in most cases the leadership to reach out to the community will have to come from the principal, with the involvement of at least some of the teaching staff. According to the traditions of bureaucratic practice, leadership rests with the principal and will continue to do so until school-based management and other restructuring activities are much more widely implemented.

The administrators and teachers who are most likely to reach out to the community are those who have a sense of the urgency of the nation's urban educational and social problems, who are willing to see themselves as part of both the problem and the solution, who don't find outrageous the belief that all children can learn and succeed, and who see that teachers and administrators can benefit from improved connections with families. Sharing responsibility for children's learning and development can reduce the burden, the isolation, and the stress felt by so many hard-working and dedicated school professionals today.

The League of Schools Reaching Out offers a network of information, support, encouragement, recognition, and opportunities for research and pilot projects. It is a way for busy administrators, teachers, and parents to share experiences about what works and what doesn't. Through the league's mechanisms – a newsletter, a journal, and other publications; technical assistance; videos; computer bulletin boards; and video conferences – schools can draw on the theoretical and practical ideas that have been derived in recent years from the work of Comer, Epstein, Levin, Rich, Kagan, Zigler, Cochran, Weiss, Seeley, IRE's Schools Reaching Out, and others.

Members of the league have an opportunity to help one another pull together the diverse strands and recognize the commonalities in the progress that has been made toward new definitions and practices of parent involvement. In doing so, they will be moving toward realizing the ideal embodied in an old African saying: "The whole village educates the child."

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More Food for Thought

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Community Schools: A Vision of Equity and Excellence for Young Children

Jenifer Van Deusen

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Collaboration among all community elements can produce schools that better meet community needs. And educators can no longer simply pay lip service to parent involvement. Creating schools that welcome and teach all children demands energy and creativity from all of us.

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People are saying that our school system no longer meets our children's, families', or society's needs. We need to restructure our schools to forge together all elements of our diverse communities. It would seem that the community school is needed now as never before.

A current example of schools with a sense of community are those based on the ideas of James Comer (1988). In "Comer schools," intensive, democratic collaboration of parents, administrators, teachers, and support staff, aided by a team of mental health practitioners, not only raises achievement levels of the children but also inspires many parents to further their own education. This approach also provides a means for somewhat equalizing what James Coleman (1987) calls *social capital,* that is, the resources available to a child for nurturance, mentoring, personal attention, and intimacy. This social capital has been seriously eroded by societal changes, even for middle-class children. Community schools can increase these resources and ensure that each child benefits at least to some extent from them. But what are each of us doing to move toward this model in *our* communities?

People are saying that the business sector, aware that today's children are tomorrow's work force and that the information age demands a new type of worker, can be an important factor in the community school equation, an equal partner with parents, community members, and educators in the work of designing new programs to meet the emerging needs of tomorrow's citizens. It is frequently written that perpetuating the existence of an educational underclass threatens our ability as a nation to compete in the global marketplace (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). It also imperils the basis of our democratic society, which rests on a citizenry literate enough to make informed choices (Natriello, Pallas, & McDill, 1987). It is said that the business sector is ready to participate in a partnership with schools to help children learn how to learn. But what are each of us doing to bring business and schools together in *our* communities?

How can we connect this rhetoric with the reality of what is needed for equitable and excellent schools for young chil-

If the school should offer a multi-year, comprehensive early childhood program that may include preschool, child care, nutrition and health education, and community services such as parenting classes, what is each of us doing to move our school in this direction?

dren? Early childhood educators must move swiftly to form a "community of learners" within the school, and with parents and community members, the purpose of which is to learn as much as possible about programs for young children and how to put them into place.

Multi-year, comprehensive early childhood programs

The experts seem to agree that school should offer a multi-year, comprehensive early childhood program that may include preschool and child care programs, nutrition and health services, and parent education and involvement.

The early childhood program should be planned with careful attention to quality. It should include the following components identified in effective programs for young children:

- a low teacher/child ratio;
- careful planning of program goals, with objectives and developmentally appropriate activities keyed to attaining these goals;
- rigorous training in early childhood development and education and family systems for all staff (teachers, assistants, and administrators);
- strong collaboration with parents, recognizing that parents are equal partners with schools in education and care; and
- sensitivity and responsiveness to the whole child, including health and nutritional needs (Bredekamp, 1987; Natriello, Pallas, & McDill, 1987).

Many of us do not disagree. But are enough of us taking action to make the words into reality?

Additionally, the early childhood program should not be an island unto itself, but should be fully integrated into the school community. Ideally, schools would be ungraded (Elkind, 1986; Goodlad & Anderson, 1987), making for continuous progress. Inter-age tutoring and learning opportunities, particularly in cooperative groups, would enhance the learning and social development of all the learners involved (Johnson & Johnson, 1972), as well as validate the learning styles of the cultures represented. Grouping for instruction would be done on the basis of need and would be reassessed constantly.

Curriculum planning should be based on what we know about how young children learn, and knowledge of the range of intelligences and learning styles present in any one group. Stressing the "delivery of basic skills" in a mechanical, formally academic setting robs learning of its excitement for young children and creates the joyless school atmosphere that further discriminates against those at risk for school failure (Levin, 1985). Provision for children to dance, sing or build so that they may express or enhance their understandings should be as important as the traditional verbal activities. Young children should also be encouraged to develop their thinking skills in contexts that respect and support their cultures of origin. There are exemplary teachers that do all this. But what about the rest of us? What are we, individually, doing to make this happen? Because it *won't* happen without us.

Child-centered curricula

Recent curriculum development recommendations encourage us to build on how children learn and to validate them as learners. With these new curricula we can maintain high expectations for learning, emphasizing learning to think, and learning through developmentally appropriate activities. The "whole language" approach to reading and writing puts language and thinking at the center of the school program and encourages children to find and communicate their own meaning as they learn authentically (Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman, 1987). An experiential approach to the development of math concepts and understanding of operations acknowledges that learning occurs by moving from the concrete to the abstract and back again (Kamii, 1985). Hands-on science programs help children discover the natural world as they learn the processes of inquiry and hypothesis. Access to technology such as computers and video helps children to extend their understanding

The early childhood program should not be an island unto itself, but should be fully integrated into the school community. What are we as individuals doing to move toward the elementary people, or toward the early childhood education people, as the case may be?

of systems and the world, and empowers them through the use of adult tools. Multicultural awareness infused into all activities encourages self-esteem while helping children accommodate to a pluralistic society. These approaches can be implemented through thematic units and through classroom learning centers, which allow for children's choice and movement. Children should contribute to what is studied, as well as the regulation and operation of the school. In this way, children will come to take charge of their own learning and begin to learn about democracy in action. Some teachers try to move in these directions. Others among us nod in agreement but continue to do business as usual.

Approaches such as these are the bases for high-quality early childhood programs. Vital to the future success of such programs are parental and community understanding, support, and involvement in planning and implementation. Educators can no longer simply pay lip service to all these sound ideas, and to parent involvement. Creating schools that welcome and teach all children demands energy and creativity from all of us. Only when we all work together will we be able to create schools that are equitable and excellent for all of our children.

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Allies in Excellence

When schools and community groups form an alliance, the outcome can be well worth the investment of time and effort

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BY TONY STANSBERRY AND DAVID WESTBROOK

SURE, a school-community partnership is a great idea, but is it worth the effort of trying to hold such an alliance together? Educators usually agree a community alliance can boost local support for their school district, but many also harbor misgivings about bringing together diverse organizations with often-conflicting institutional goals. This anxiety can prevent many such programs from becoming a reality. Fear of what goes on behind the scenes, it seems, dooms more alliances than budgetary constraints ever will.

The truth is, there is nothing to fear. With a clear focus, a community alliance will survive outside pressures, changes in key personnel, and the conflicting short-term goals of its members. But preserving that focus requires leadership, vision, hard work, and understanding from all participants.

In the city of Grandview, Mo., a community alliance linking the school district, city hall, the chamber of commerce, and the local water district is entering its fourth year. During these years, this Kansas City suburb (population 25,000) has succeeded in passing a bond and levy issue that has boosted public confidence and led to major economic development programs, such as the creation of Tax Increment Finance Districts and a project to renovate Grandview's downtown area.

The alliance grew out of the Grandview school board's recognition that the district should provide leadership to the community. Fearing the schools had become too isolated, the board looked to strengthen the ties to the community.

The result was the Grandview Progress Alliance. Our initial project, the bond election, was a success. This success helped us establish effective working relationships among the leaders of the alliance's partner organizations. These relationships have survived despite passing years, diverse organizational goals, and turnover at the top of some of the organizations.

Since that first project, we've identified several key steps we think are vital to the success of any community alliance:

1 Identify values and goals important to each organization and embrace the ones you share. Our four organizations had an advantage in this area in that Grandview 2000, a citywide task force formed to chart an agenda for the community's future, had already identified goals for community leadership. These goals included upgrading the city's image, increasing economic development, maintaining the superior performance of the school district, defusing potential conflict as the population increases, and improving the quality of public services.

This agenda presented us with specific, well-researched goals. At our initial meetings during the bond and levy campaign, we reviewed these goals and came to realize that cooperation would make each goal more attainable.

At the same time, we identified values our organizations held in common. In fact, we were astonished to discover how closely the values of the different organizations paralleled each other. Although the language varied, each organization had recently refocused its operational guidelines to promote what business people would call a "customer orientation." For example, the city had begun a campaign to improve the municipal government's responsiveness to the needs of residents and businesses.

After obtaining the approval of our boards, our next step was to secure some outside assistance. Specifically, we sought an experienced consultant who would serve as a resource—and at times a conscience—to help the alliance maintain its focus, purpose, and direction.

2 Use an independent consultant as an adviser, referee, and mediator. We rapidly found a consulting firm that offered us the necessary expertise, resources, and vision. Because the firm had experience working with both government and education agencies as well as service industries, it was ideally suited to serve as the glue that would help keep the alliance together. The consultant became a kind of associate member of the Grandview Progress Alliance, helping mediate disagreements, usually by refocusing attention on the mission at hand.

Working with a consultant is always a process of adaptation. Experience from similar situations might not be applicable; skills that were useful in one situation might prove worthless in another. It is important to find a consultant who understands why something worked before and why it

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might or might not work now. It also is important to find a consultant who is comfortable working with many different kinds of personalities and who shares your commitment to the goal.

Once you've found the right consultant, don't neglect to follow the consultant's advice. Certainly it is valuable to provide information and offer opinions. But once the consultant has helped develop a plan, the partner organizations should give the plan the time and support it requires—and resist the temptation to fine-tune it to death. Too many alliances, caught up in the search for the ultimate refinement, plan and plan and never accomplish anything.

Perhaps the most valuable role a consultant plays is that of the trusted presenter of the outsider's perspective. Adjusting a course of action to take that perspective into account can make the difference between marginal success and enthusiastic response—or even between disaster and success. We learned that when we developed public service announcements promoting the community. With our consultant's advice, we were able to position the announcements to reach major segments of the radio audience—and to secure air time on leading stations during key broadcast times.

3 Create and agree to a plan of action and then follow through on it. With our goals established, the next thing for us to do was to plan how to reach them. All five groups—represented by the school superintendent, the city manager, the executive manager of the water district, the executive director of the chamber of commerce, and the account team from the consultant firm—met together to identify and assign tasks.

For example, as part of the effort to improve the awareness of Grandview's advantages among influential citizens in the Kansas City area, we developed a direct-mail campaign that pointed out the suburb's strengths and asked recipients to recommend Grandview as a successful location to establish a business. Responsibilities were assigned in accordance with the resources each of the four Grandview agencies could bring to bear. The school district assigned a staff member to coordinate the project, the city provided clerical assistance, and the Chamber of Commerce and water district provided funding and additional clerical help. All the agencies supplied mailing lists and contacts with community leaders—plus the time and energy of their own top executives.

The consultant reviewed and modified the plan each year, but once it was established, each organization followed it. There were no last-minute alterations, no going off track to explore tangents. We do preserve the ability to be flexible, however. During the second year of the program, for example, an opportunity developed that made us adjust our plan. Our first year's efforts in gaining contacts in the media paid off when Grandview was invited by the *Kansas City Business Journal*, the area's biggest business publication, to contribute a profile of the community.

To take full advantage of the opportunity for extra publicity, we restructured our plan to create "Celebrate Grandview," a week-long series of events designed to focus attention on the community. We were able to remain within budget while increasing the impact of our message. As an added benefit, we helped recharge the community's pride in itself.

4 Avoid surprises by keeping key people informed. Once your school board has voted to support a community alliance, following one simple rule will help to preserve that support: Keep the board and other influential community leaders informed. Nobody likes surprises.

We follow that rule in Grandview, reporting all of our meetings and discussions to the respective boards of the alliance partner organizations. In addition, we regularly attend each other's board meetings to express appreciation for support, clarify questions, and reaffirm our commitment to work together. Every single board member might not always approve of every single alliance activity, but our boards have made and kept their own commitment to support our efforts.

If you fail to keep key leaders informed, questions like "What are you doing about such-and-such?" and "How come you've forgotten to address this-and-that?" will inevitably arise. The answer is to establish regular briefings on your plan and its progress. Schedule a formal presentation and regular updates of the plan, its contents, and the information and rationale used to create it.

This procedure builds confidence and perspective. Board members learn to see the big picture and rely on the alliance's judgment. If a problem suddenly becomes hot, board members will be more supportive if they know there is a plan to address the problem. If they are not informed, you will get pressure to act immediately, which can lead to costly mistakes.

5 Generate community support by showing the value of working together. Although the alliance exists to promote the school district and the community, it must also promote itself. Each partner organization must help build public support for the community alliance. Fortunately, you can do so in many ways:

- Promote the alliance in presentations and newsletters.
- Present a united front. Appear together frequently, and make a point of presenting the same point of view, with the same emphasis, when discussing an issue.
- Develop information that illustrates the value of the organization's investment.
- Explain alliance goals and activities to employees.
- Secure favorable publicity in the local news media.

This effort will ease the work of the alliance and keep it in tune with the ultimate audience, the public. Staying in touch with public opinion ensures that the alliance is working in support of the community's wants and needs.

In short, community alliances can be extraordinarily effective at making the most of a community's capabilities. In Grandview, we have found the rewards of our community alliance have been well worth the investment.

In our case, the total cost of the community alliance—including consultant fees and costs such as production and printing, advertising, and secretarial staff—ran to approximately $30,000 per year. We divided the financial responsibility among the four alliance partners in proportion to their available resources. Accordingly, the school district contributed the largest share—about half—of the necessary funds, followed by the city and the water district, each of which paid about 20 percent. The chamber of commerce picked up the rest of the tab. We think these costs are low—considering the alliance has helped earn Grandview a reputation as a progressive community. ■

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School and Community Working Together:

Community Education in Springfield

Susan Freedman and Peter J. Negroni

Education in Springfield, Massachusetts, is a cooperative effort that involves families, the community, and business with the schools and the school district. This involvement takes various forms, many of which fall under the rubric of "collaboration" and "partnership."

Working Together

One area in which collaborative support is obvious is management. The Springfield Public School District has committed itself to promoting school-based management, based on two facts:

1. Effective Schools research indicates that when staff at individual schools are provided with greater autonomy and discretion, they assume more responsibility for the improvement of student learning. They demonstrate energy and creativity that comes from acting on their beliefs about what their students need and from having increased control over the means to reach their goals.
2. Self-management, through broadly representative school-based management teams, strengthens links between schools and the community; this, in turn, strengthens education.

In the 1990-91 school year, 31 companies and six area colleges released their employees for one and a half hours a week during the workday to volunteer in the schools as tutors or mentors. The Lincoln School in Springfield operates with a broadly inclusive sense of its community. The school has been promoting intergenerational linkages in a variety of ways.

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Students spend time at senior citizen centers and group residences as part of their community service projects. Intergenerational awareness is promoted through a schoolwide sensitivity training program contributed by Genesis Health Ventures, a member of the Alliance for Youth Partnership, which brings together the school system and other community agencies and organizations that serve children and families. This sensitivity training enabled third and fourth graders to experience the effects of aging by wearing goggles smeared with Vaseline to simulate vision impairment, walking with rice in their shoes to understand pain, and being confined to wheelchairs and walkers. They were also asked to imagine and describe their feelings about the death of a friend.

Education Is a Community-wide Responsibility

Community partnership initiatives are guided by the premise that "education takes place at home, in the community, and in the schools." They are based on the realization that the schools and other community institutions depend on one another.

This interdependence is recognized explicitly in the preamble to the Springfield Business/Education Collaboration Agreement, which states, "[T]he success of the school system as measured by its ability to instill the appropriate skills in students requires the active support and involvement of the business community." A similar sense of interdependence is reflected in the School and Community Agencies/Organizations Agreement, in which all parties "agree that all children in our care need and deserve the very best each of us can offer in the way of professional support regardless of their problems or extent of their needs."

Partnerships in Springfield—between schools and families, the business community, and community agencies and organizations—are initiated and promoted through a series of formal policies and agreements. These agreements are typically drawn up in the form of a compact that is signed by all of the parties in a formal ceremony celebrating the community spirit and joint purposes that have brought the partners together. These agreements also demonstrate, quite explicitly, that partnerships are a two-way street.

Schools and the Business Community

The Springfield Business/Education Collaboration Agreement of April 1990 was signed by the superintendent, all members of the school board, and the chief executive officers of more than 50 Springfield businesses. The agreement with the business community elicits partnerships for improving and restructuring the schools, helping them become what they need to be in order to address the challenges of urban education. The agreement lists the following priorities: school-based management and improvement planning; early childhood education; restructuring of curriculum; and improved professional development and staff evaluation. Corresponding to these priorities, the business partners are invited to become involved in restructuring by:

- Sending a business representative to the site-based management teams in order to share business experience in organizational development and decentralized planning, and business perspective on outcomes of the improvement process;
- Joining in a critical reexamination of the current K-12 curriculum in light of the expected requirements of the 21st century workplace; and
- Sharing state-of-the-art business practices in staff evaluation and motivation.

Through this partnership, both parties pledge to improve the public schools. Just as importantly, they make a pledge to each other. The school system pledges to the business community that it will graduate:

- Students who have a work ethic to carry over into their employment;
- Students who understand and respect cultural differences and will carry those attitudes into relations with their workmates;
- Students who have learned how to learn and solve problems, in school and on the job; and
- Students who will exhibit ethical strength and integrity in the workplace.

The business partners, in turn, pledge to provide the community and its students with:

- The "creation" and "sustenance" of "good jobs" for youths and other community residents;
- Their best efforts to maintain an integrated workforce that reflects the diversity of the community;
- Opportunities for advancement for graduates of the Springfield Public Schools;
- Support for continuous learning and adult literacy programs in the workplace; and
- Employment opportunities for students that lead to career awareness and help to nurture the work ethic.

Schools and Human Services Agencies

Similar elements of reciprocity can be found in Springfield's School and Community Agencies/Organizations Agreement, signed on May 31, 1990, at a citywide Conference for Children. This agreement created the Springfield Alliance for Youth, an umbrella for youth-serving organizations, agencies, and programs. The alliance was created to improve coordination and increase collaborative efforts on behalf of children, youths, and families, and to help all students overcome out-of-school barriers to meaningful education. In addition to sharing a mutual concern for the needs of the "whole child," signatories to this agreement pledged to help each other meet those needs. As part of its pledge, the school system will create a computerized student database. This data will be shared with other community service providers in order to facilitate follow-up and a more holistic approach to services for children. The district also pledged to help its counseling staff become more knowledgeable about available community services and agencies.

As part of their commitment, the service agencies and organizations will train school system counseling staff in the methodology of case management, reinforce the importance of regular school attendance by school children, help create public awareness, and provide community-based sites for the school system's dropout recovery program.

Schools and Families

Reciprocity and clearly articulated areas of responsibility for achieving a shared goal are also the themes running through of Springfield's Formal Policy on Parent Involvement, adopted in November 1990. This policy recognizes parents as full partners in educational programs, establishes a parent association at every school, and creates a district-level, federated parent-involvement mechanism, SPAN (Springfield Parent Advisory Network). SPAN's responsibilities include helping the school administration and school board stay current on parents' concerns and ideas, periodically surveying the parent population to assure that a wide range of parents' perspectives are brought to the attention of the school system; and reaching out, through the "Parents-Talking-to-Parents" initiative, to segments of the parent population that are systematically underrepresented in traditional parent forums and parent involvement activities.

The school administration has pledged to seek funds and identify resources to support parent involvement; hold principals accountable for implementing the parent-involvement policy; provide translation policies and child care to ensure the broadest possible participation o[illegible]arents; and assign a central office administrator to ensure that these and other support activities are implemented.

Springfield is taking a leadership role in collaborating with the business community to facilitate family involvement in education and home-school partnerships. This business collaboration has become increasingly important as more and more parents work during the school day. Business partners who signed the Collaboration Agreement were invited to consider two specific ways in which the workplace could become more friendly to parent involvement:

1. Allowing guidance and other school staff to visit parents at the work site.
2. Providing one hour of release time at least twice a year to allow parents to attend conferences with their children's teachers.

The Benefits of Partnerships

One result of these partnership agreements is that more people than ever before are involved in the effort to change and improve education in Springfield. Partnerships have mobilized the energies of many caring adults who tutor, read to, or act as mentors for thousands of students. The number of school-business partnerships increased by 50 percent in the 1990-91 school year. Leaders of the Springfield School Volunteers, Inc., which coordinates the contributions of individual volunteers and representatives of community groups that are part of the Community Partners network, estimate that 3,000 adults were involved in the schools during the 1990-91 school year. This involvement included both direct services to children and service on district- or building-level school improvement teams, task forces, and interagency councils. This is a 25 percent increase in participation in two years. Some of the tangible outcomes of increased involvement have been:

- **Choice**. Business people who served on site-based management teams provided technical and management expertise to help magnet schools describe their unique programs more effectively in order to help parents make informed choices.
- **Public relations**. Volunteers from the business community, especially in the areas of advertising and media, collaborated with the schools to design and launch a public relations effort on behalf of the Springfield Public Schools.
- **Interpersonal relations**. The Alliance for Youth held a violence prevention conference entitled "Lifeskills for Today's Youth: How To Create a Non-Violent World." The purpose was to teach students mediation skills that can assist them in their interpersonal relationships both within the school and in the larger community.

- **Dropout prevention.** The Alliance for Youth sponsored the External Alternative Program, a dropout prevention/alternative suspension program in which dropouts receive academic help, preventive education on drugs and alcohol, and follow-up assistance as a transition back to school.

The schools could not have achieved these outcomes alone. They are a testament to the strength and efficacy of collaborative endeavors.

> *The inclusion of parents in the educational process is of critical importance to children's educational achievement for three very important reasons. First, parents are the most powerful and permanent forces in children's lives. Parents' abilities to reinforce what is taught in school is one of the most significant determinants of children's abilities to master new material and develop new skills. Thus, schools must keep parents informed of children's academic materials and offer to help parents motivate their children to handle the schools' academic demands. Second, Children's attitudes toward school are largely influenced by how their parents feel about the school. ...Therefore, it is important that schools welcome parents into their facilities, and that parents are made to feel comfortable and valued in discussing matters with teachers, administrators, and auxiliary school personnel. Third, parents have bonded with their children, have special insights that could be of help in schools' efforts to enrich each child's learning experiences. ...Creating an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding between schools and parents will require a dramatic change in how our nation views its schools. ...The mutual partnership between parents and schools will ensure that all children arrive at school each day ready to receive an education.*
>
> Moore, E. K. (October 1990). "Increasing Parental Involvement as a Means of Improving Our Nation's Schools," paper prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation.

SECTION II

Establishing a Learning Community Within the School

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Improving Schools from Within

Teachers, Parents, and Principals Can Make the Difference

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Becoming Colleagues

I am a beekeeper. I am looking out a window of an 1800 farmhouse in coastal Maine at three hives of Italian honey bees draped under a generous cloak of snow. Last summer I robbed over a hundred pounds of honey from each of these colonies, more than enough to get family and friends through the winter—leaving enough behind for the bees. I remember looking through this same window last summer, pondering these remarkable little creatures and their complex social organization. In a hive of 60,000 or so insects there are scouts always on the lookout in the fields for a new source of nectar about which to tell others through their elaborate dances. Fanners stand on the landing board during a hot day for hours at a time, beating their wings in order to circulate fresh air through the colony. Water carriers find a pond or stream and portage this precious matter back to help cool the hive and process the honey. Nectar carriers bring in the raw material for the honey. Cappers seal the honeycomb in wax and drones mate with the queen and keep the hive strong in numbers.

Observing these astonishing levels and examples of communication, mutual visibility, sharing, and interdependence, I could not help but compare the bees' little society with those we call schools. Perhaps in some ways this is an unfair comparison, but the juxtaposition suggests to me just how much parallel play and adversarial and competitive relationships dominate our schools, how little we see of collegiality, and how much our schools suffer because of it. On the one hand, it is a discouraging realization; but these little honey bees also have a more positive message. They suggest just how great the power of cooperative behavior in the service of a common purpose may be. There is as much to be learned from honeybees as from school sandboxes.

What Is Collegiality?

It's difficult to spell, hard to pronounce, harder to define. It's hardest still to establish in a school. Strangely, collegiality and the ideas it connotes have seldom shown up in the effective schools literature of the past decades. Collegiality is not one of Edmonds's five factors: strong leadership, emphasis on basic skills, a clear sense of purpose, monitoring of academic progress, and an orderly environment (Edmonds, 1979). Nor is collegiality a part of the vocabulary of current national studies of American education. It is recognized neither as part of the problem nor as part of the solution.

I wonder why not. Most probably agree that collegiality in a school is nice, but it is a soft and fuzzy notion at a time when schools need rigor and clarity. Collegiality is nice, but it is a frill when schools need to be pared to the basics. Collegiality is an adult notion, when the lesson plan for schools should be students. And collegiality is nice, but it is perhaps risky. Notions such as these keep schools from investing time and effort in promoting collegial relationships. In fact, I find the least common types of relationships among adults in schools and universities to be those that are collegial, cooperative, and interdependent.

It is important to distinguish between *collegiality* and another word that sounds like it—*congeniality*. Congeniality suggests people getting along with one another. Friendly, cordial associations. Talk in the teachers' room about the Red Sox, Yankees, and Celtics. Discussion about *Roe* v. *Wade* or plans for the weekend. Congeniality. People enjoying each other's company and getting along. Schools need it. Every organization needs it.

Usually, when we refer to "my colleagues" we are, in fact, talking not about collegiality but about congeniality. So what is collegiality? It is the flip side of parallel play. It is not sandboxes, but honeybees.

Judith Warren Little (1981) offers a good operational definition of collegiality in schools. Collegiality is the presence of four specific behaviors, as follows: Adults in schools *talk about practice*. These conversations about teaching and learning are frequent, continuous, concrete, and precise. Adults in schools *observe each other* engaged in the practice of teaching and administration. These observations become the practice to reflect on and talk about. Adults engage together in *work on curriculum* by planning, designing, researching, and evaluating curriculum. Finally, adults in schools *teach each other* what they know about teaching, learning, and leading. Craft knowledge is revealed, articulated, and shared.

I have not seen a better thumbnail description of a healthy school. And yet as obvious and compelling as these professional activities are, they find all too little following. Collegiality is eclipsed by other goals that appear more closely related to the fundamental purposes of schools.

The literature suggests that a number of outcomes may be associated with collegiality. Decisions tend to be better. Implementation of decisions is better. There is a higher level of morale and trust among adults. Adult learning is energized and more likely to be sustained. There is even some evidence that motivation of students and *their* achievement rises, and evidence that when adults share and cooperate, students tend to do the same.

A healthy institution is one characterized by relatedness with other people and gratification from others and from the work itself. If these are among the benefits of more collegial relationships among adults in schools, collegiality may indeed be closely related to the time-honored purposes of schools. And the task of developing collegiality may be integral to the task of improving schools.

Introducing Collegiality in the Schools

Collegiality is nice—but it is extremely difficult to introduce into the persistent cultures of schools. Schools display little collegiality because, like most good ideas in education, it is easier said than done. As we all know, enormous risks and frequent costs are associated with observation, communication, mutual visibility, sharing knowledge, and talking openly about the work we do. Collegiality requires that everyone be willing to give up something without knowing in advance just what that may be. But the risks and costs of interdependence are nothing next to the risks and costs of sustaining a climate of emotional toxicity, of working in isolation, in opposite corners of the sandbox.

Most good schools that I visit are ones where somehow parallel play and adversarial and competitive relationships among adults have been transformed into more cooperative and collegial ones. It *is* possible. Like inner city schools whose students are achieving at a level far above what might be predicted, there are precedents. And, as Ronald Edmonds often said to me and others, "If I can show you *one* school that can do it, it can be done."

I think that the problem of how to change things from "I" to "we," of how to bring a good measure of collegiality and relatedness to adults who work in schools, is one that belongs on the national agenda of school improvement—at the top. It belongs at the top because the relationships among adults in schools are the basis, the precondition, the *sine qua non* that allow, energize, and sustain all other attempts at school improvement. Unless adults talk with one another, observe one another, and help one another, very little will change.

And it belongs at the top because collegiality is not the natural state of things in schools and never will be. It will not occur on its own. A group of graduate students engaged in internships in Boston-area schools compiled two lists: The first included forces (such as an in-school newsletter) they found at work in schools that seemed to contribute to the formation of collegial relations; the second was a list of forces (such as teacher evaluation) observed in the schools that contributed to isolated, adversarial, and competitive relationships. The second list was overwhelmingly predominant. It seems clear that collegiality will come to schools only if it is valued and deliberately sought after, only if someone deliberately takes action to overcome these obstacles.

I do not think that teachers and principals really like to work the greater part of each day swamped by students and isolated from adults, secluded in what one teacher called "our adjoining caves." I do not believe that teachers or principals really teach or learn well in a climate of competition, isolation, or siege. Rather, I believe that one high school teacher speaks for most in saying, "I don't want to get out. I want to get better at what I do along with others who are equally interested in their personal and professional growth."

There is growing evidence that principals who value collegiality can help a school move toward it. Principals may not have tremendous resources at their disposal, but most have more than they think. For instance, Little (1981) found that the prevalence of collegiality in a school was closely related to four specific behaviors of the principal:

1) States expectations explicitly for cooperation among teachers. "I expect all of us to work together, help one another, and make our knowledge available."
2) Models collegiality, that is, enacts it by joining with teachers and other principals working collaboratively to improve conditions in the school.
3) Rewards collegiality by granting release time, recognition, space, materials, or funds to teachers who work as colleagues.
4) Protects teachers who initially engage in collegial behavior and thereby risk the retribution of their fellows.

I find this a powerful little protocol for any of us who would like to have a constructive influence on others.

There are other means within reach to promote collegial relationships. It has long been my belief that the optimal number of adults working together for children is two. One teacher in a self-contained classroom gets pretty lonely and depleted.

Large teams, on the other hand, spend too much time and energy in meetings, trying to achieve consensus. As principal, I encouraged teachers to pair with one another, and almost half of them did. The exchange might simply be, "You take my kids for math and I'll take yours for language," or a more elaborate setup in which the two teachers trade all the time in different subjects. Or it might be that they treat the two classrooms as one large class and divide up their responsibilities. In high schools other possibilities present themselves, such as an English teacher and a history teacher teaming up. Teachers working in any kind of team are provided with a built-in support system, someone to observe and by whom to be observed, an adult with whom to talk about teaching, learning, and students. In short, teachers who work together can enjoy continuous professional, collegial relationships.

And teachers who engage in important school decisions develop collegial relationships. Teachers, of course, make hundreds of decisions each day in their classrooms about supplies, discipline, and assignment of readings. But other important decisions that directly affect teachers' lives are made by someone else. Exclusion from critical choices leads to a pervasive feeling of inefficacy and isolation that erodes the profession. As one teacher put it: "I would not advise any of my children to become a teacher. There is no room to do things that I believe in as an educator." Decision making, on the other hand, bonds the decision makers. Let me give two illustrations of decisions to which teachers can be a party and thereby become colleagues.

Empowering Teachers

Money can be an antidote to a feeling of powerlessness. A little money is a large antidote. Each year our school was allocated about $30 per child for all instructional purposes. I allocated a "fair share" to each teacher—about $750 a year. How this money was spent was up to each teacher; it could go for texts, games, food, teacher courses, field trips, or testing materials.

Seven hundred and fifty dollars is not much, but it is more than many teachers have to spend. It is meaningless to give people responsibility without giving them the resources to exercise that responsibility. In that sense, the money is almost as important as a symbol as it is a means for teachers to buy materials and supplies. It is a vote of confidence. What teachers do with limited funds is what most people do with their budgets; they become responsible and resourceful; they feel empowered. And what most teachers do is to pool their precious resources in order to stretch them further. Joint purchases of books, science materials, and field trips led to joint discussion about these materials, their use and benefit to youngsters. A simple budget and the occasion to make decisions helped generate complex forms of collegiality.

The profession of teaching in colleges and universities and in independent schools does not face the same crisis as that in public elementary and secondary schools. One reason is that professors and teachers there have a greater influence over what they teach, how, and with which materials. Public elementary and secondary teachers have less control over curriculum, but they can have more.

Each June I asked teachers to prepare curriculum outlines for the following year that revealed what they wanted to teach. The outlines might reflect a little or a lot of the system's guidelines, but above all were to be "honest." This practice shifted the teacher's role from passively compliant to actively creative. Although exposing themselves in this way caused both labor and risks, most teachers gladly accepted the accountability, because with the costs came a large measure of control over classroom instruction.

Unlike the system's guidelines, one teacher's curriculum never corresponded neatly with that of another. Their curriculum outlines did not form anything resembling a coherent blueprint for the elementary years suitable for solemn presentation at a PTA meeting. So, each year we selected a different subject—science, for instance—and collated each teacher's plans for the year. A huge poster in the faculty room revealed what each teacher was doing in science; it also tended to show some startling omissions and redundancies. Why was everyone growing bean seeds? Questions emerged. Teachers had to talk with one another, establish some priorities, and make some decisions. The curriculum began to be articulated because the teachers began to be articulate, to be colleagues. Mindless use of imposed curricula leads to sandbox behavior and grit. Active contribution to and creation of curricula leads to honeybee behavior—and honey.

The biggest problem besetting schools is the primitive quality of human relationships among children, parents, teachers, and administrators. Many schools perpetuate infantilism. School boards infantilize superintendents; superintendents, principals; principals, teachers; and teachers, children. This leads to children and adults who frequently behave like infants, complying with authority from fear or dependence, waiting until someone's back is turned to do something "naughty." To the extent that teachers and principals together can make important school decisions, they become colleagues. They become grown-ups. They become professionals.

But the number and nature of the decisions for which teachers and principals have responsibility determine just how grown up they will feel (and behave). There are, of course, many other fingers in the pie. Many outside the school building—in the central office, in the state department of education, and in universities—also want to influence important school decisions such as those concerning pupil evaluation, curriculum, parent involvement, design of space, codes of discipline, and selection of textbooks. And they have just claims. So although there is probably no more fertile, demanding, and satisfying place for collegiality in schools than in sharing responsibility for important decisions, the world out there has other ideas about how these decisions should be made and by whom. In short, just how ownership for school decisions is distributed has a huge influence on the capacity of a school to improve from within.

FOUR

Building a Community of Learners

When I was growing up on a farm, my favorite companion was a goat. She was smart, friendly, playful, unpredictable, with a mind of her own that would not distinguish between a snack of grass and the carefully tended flowers surrounding our house. She was a most agreeable companion, until confined by a wagon harness, when she became most ornery. In short, our goat asked for a lot but contributed much in return.

A generation later, when my two daughters sought a farm companion, we took on five sheep. They lived happily within a fence, caused little trouble—and brought disappointingly little joy. "Mary Had a Little Lamb" notwithstanding, the sheep turned out to be docile, unaffectionate, and uninteresting. They asked for little and contributed less.

List Logic

Recently, I had the chance to spend some time at the Department of Educational Studies at Oxford University. I went to learn about things in another country, particularly about the professional development of teachers and headmasters. I visited schools and talked with many educators, and I returned from England with new thoughts about education in my own country—and about sheep and goats.

It became clearer to me, while 2,500 miles away, that our public schools have come to be dominated and driven by a conception of educational improvement that might be called *list logic*. The assumption of many outside of schools seems to be that if they can create lists of desirable school characteristics, if they can only be clear enough about directives and regulations, then these things will happen in schools. For instance, the intention of one state legislature is to "identify competencies of effective teachers through research and develop training, certification, selection, and compensation procedures that recognize and support these competencies." These kinds of formulations seem to rest on several assumptions:

- Schools do not have the capacity or the will to improve themselves; improvement must therefore come from sources outside of schools, such as universities, state departments of education, and national commissions.
- What needs to be improved about schools is the level of pupil performance and achievement, best measured by standardized tests.
- Schools can be found in which pupils are achieving beyond what might be predicted. By observing teachers and principals in these schools, we can identify their characteristics as "desirable."
- Teachers and principals in other schools can be trained to display the desirable traits of their counterparts in high-achieving schools. Then their pupils too will excel.
- School improvement, then, is an attempt to identify what schoolpeople should know and be able to do and to devise ways to get them to know and do it.

This conception of school improvement has led to an extraordinary proliferation of lists. Lists of characteristics of the "effective principal," the "effective teacher," the "effective school"; lists of minimum pupil competencies and of behavioral objectives for teachers; lists of new certification requirements, mandates, and regulations. The list logic has begotten a list sweepstakes to see whose is the best list. Advocates argue that their description of a desirable school, their catalogue of the desirable characteristics of schoolpeople, and their prescribed methods for attaining these ends rest on the firmest ground.

These myriad lists are making some valuable contributions. Lists provide a coherent nucleus around which to build a conception of an ideal school. Lists are ready vehicles that enable those outside of schools to approach the important matters inside schools. Embedded in each list is usually some fresh thinking about schools that widens the universe of alternatives available for improving schools. Each list usually attracts a band of believers who will take the next step and employ the list to address the problems of some real schools. And each list that succeeds in improving a single school holds the promise of improving all schools. In short, the list logic of educational change seems simple, straightforward, and compelling. Its only flaw is that it does not seem to work very well.

I suspect that there may be several reasons why this is so. For one thing, the widespread belief that schools and schoolpeople do not have the capacity to improve themselves is not unknown to those who work in schools. Most teachers and principals respond to even enlightened lists not with renewed energy, vigor, and motivation, but rather with feelings of tedium, oppression, guilt, and anger. The vivid lack of congruence between the way schools are and the way others' lists would have them be causes most schoolpeople to feel overwhelmed, insulted, and inadequate—hardly building blocks for improving schools or professional relationships.

The assumption that "strong leadership" and "effective teaching" are whatever brings about high student test scores suggests a very limited—and demeaning—view of both students and their educators. Good education is more than the generation of good scores on tests. Furthermore, what causes teachers and principals to spring out of bed at 6:30 A.M. is not the preparation for, administration and scoring of, and remediation after tests. Tests lead to a preoccupation with production, workbooks, worksheets, and drills, whereas teachers report that the major reward they derive from teaching is promoting, in broader and more imaginative ways, the growth and development of their students.

Lists tend to be prescriptions for other people and for other people's children. Most external lists constitute a suffocating description of a teacher's job, a principal's job, or a pupil's job. They create roles that few of the list makers are apt to want for themselves or for their own children.

Moreover, I doubt that we would find that many teachers, principals, and students in high-achieving schools comply closely with anybody's list. As Ronald Edmonds often said, we know far more about the features that characterize an effective school than we know about how a school becomes effective in the first place. Why, then, do we try to force schools we do not like to resemble those we do like by employing means that have little to do with the evolution of the kind of schools we like?

And finally, I think the list logic breaks down because it depends for its success on the existence of bright sheep. We read proposals every day suggesting ways to attract, train, retain, and retrain the best and the brightest to work with our children in school. Yet, on the very next page, we read more and more demands that such individuals comply with the exacting requirements of externally controlled, predetermined, routinized, carefully monitored jobs.

Only bright sheep can pull that off. But sheep don't come that way, and neither do people. As I learned on the farm, you can have dumb, plodding, pedestrian, undistinguished, compliant sheep—or you can have bright, discriminating, questioning, willful goats. You may have both in one school, but it is extremely difficult to have both within a single individual. To be sure, many successful teachers and principals—goats at heart—report keeping "two sets of books." They keep a close eye on what others expect of them: prescribed curricula, minimum student competencies, criteria against which they will be evaluated. They may appear to meet the specifications of these external lists. They also keep a careful eye on what they want to accomplish in their work, according to their own vision of a good school or classroom. Unfortunately, the dissonance and exhaustion created by merely living with, much less reconciling, these two sets of books too often obliterates any good that might be inherent in either. This leaves many adults in school agreeing with one veteran Chicago-area principal who lamented: "You know what I want to be in my next incarnation? An educator."

Higher salaries may lure some bright young people with high test scores and class rank to submit to the indignities of public school life, but money alone will do little to make working in the schools a satisfying profession. Teachers with responsibilities for dozens of human lives 190 days each year and principals who run complex schools with budgets in the millions of dollars do not want to be run themselves, especially badly. Lists of desirable characteristics can be valuable, but they have been taken too far. Logic has become pathologic.

If this is true, why has list logic remained the driving force in education reform? There are two obvious reasons for this. First, it *is* a logic and is thus defensible at impressive presentations before school boards and state legislatures. Second, it enjoys face validity. As one state education department's list of "the ninety-one characteristics of the effective principal" suggests, lists show that we know where we are going and that we are taking steps to get there. They allow us to determine which individuals and which schools have arrived, and they offer political cover from others higher up in the administrative chain of command. In short, lists promise change, legitimacy, and accountability to an enterprise in need of all three.

Still another reason why list logic seems so compelling is that the alternatives are *not* compelling. Anarchy? Independent schools? Free schools? No schools? Accepting schools as they are? Precious few alternatives to the logic of lists spring to mind. And as long as no other conceptions of school improvement emerge, lists will continue to dominate education reform. The debate will swirl around which elements belong on each list (was "parent involvement" a part of Edmonds's list or not?); which list is best (Bennett's, Adler's, the list proposed in *A*

Nation at Risk?); what is the best way of choosing one list to rely on rather than another (pedigree of the panelists? rigor of the research cited?); and who should make these decisions (superintendents? chief state school officers? legislators? academics?). The list logic conception of improving schools leads us down a very peculiar road indeed.

School as a Community of Learners

It is interesting, in this context, to consider the common instructions given by flight attendants to airline passengers: "For those of you traveling with small children, in the event of an oxygen failure, first place the oxygen mask on your own face and then—and only then—place the mask on your child's face." The fact of the matter is, of course, that the adult must be alive in order to help the child. In schools we spend a great deal of time placing oxygen masks on other people's faces while we ourselves are suffocating. Principals, preoccupied with expected outcomes, desperately want teachers to breathe in new ideas, yet do not themselves engage in visible, serious learning. Teachers badly want their students to learn to perform at grade level, yet seldom reveal themselves to children as learners. It is small wonder that anyone learns anything in schools.

Both within and outside the schools, many educators are growing weary of the logic of lists and would prefer that their own common sense be taken seriously, even honored. Indeed, in a growing number of educational projects around the country, I see the outlines of a conception of school reform markedly different from list logic. The Bay Area Writing Project, now related to a "thinking skills movement," Circles of Learning from Minnesota, the Triad at the University of Connecticut, the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown University, and the development of principals' centers across the country are all examples of educational groundswells beneath which a common vision seems to lie—a vision of a school quite unlike a center of production where principals, teachers, and pupils fulfill lists.

Those who take part in these and similar efforts seem to value and honor learning, participation, and cooperation above prescription, production, and competition. I see in these kinds of endeavors the concept of the school as a community of learners, a place where all participants—teachers, principals, parents, and students—engage in learning and teaching. School is not a place for important people who do not need to learn and unimportant people who do. Instead, school is a place where students discover, and adults rediscover, the joys, the difficulties, and the satisfactions of learning.

We talk constantly about the importance of student achievement, of teachers' staff development, and of the professional growth of principals as if they occur on different planets during different epochs. In a community of learners, adults and children learn simultaneously and in the same place to think critically and analytically and to solve problems that are important to them. In a community of learners, learning is endemic and mutually visible.

An anthropologist friend tells me that dramatic, profound learning takes place in societies in which people of all ages, generations, and positions—grandmother, father, child, adolescent, hunter, cook—live, work, and learn together simultaneously. The grandfather teaches the daughter. The mother teaches the cousin. Everyone is a teacher and everyone is a learner. In many ways, schools resemble these cultures. Both have many generations living together, interdependently, in close quarters for long periods of time. For instance, this kind of yeasty environment for learning is evident in one primary school in the Boston area that decided to explore the Charles River. Everyone—students, teachers, parents, and administrators—set about to discover all they could about the river. They worked together for a year to learn about the history, biology, geology, pollution, and geography of the Charles—and about the power of collective inquiry. What one person in one class discovered was shared and celebrated by everyone else. They became a community of learners.

I see elements of a community of learners in a nearby high school in which the principal and a dozen teachers meet each week to share their writing and their ideas and to make connections between their writing experiences and their work with students.

An all-white, fully English-speaking elementary school learned during February that a large number of Cambodian children would enroll in the school in the fall. When the Cambodian children arrived, the school was ready. They were greeted in September with outstretched hands of welcome and friendship and even understanding.

An important story lies behind this uncharacteristic greeting. The parents, teachers, and principal had made a decision that it was critical for *everyone* in the school—children, parents, teachers, custodians, administrators, secretaries, lunch workers—to know who these Cambodian children were, where they had come from, and why they were coming. At the outset, no one knew anything, so for the next four months, *getting ready for the Cambodian children* became the curriculum—in reading, social studies, language arts, science, and art programs. Community was real, and as a result, the experience was vital. Learning had an important purpose. Everyone learned how to say something to the Cambodian children in their own language and also gained considerable knowledge about their cultural patterns and their suffering. As part of their preparation, those in the school learned about prejudice and the harm that prejudice brings to persons who seem different. They also learned how prejudice disrupts communities—in schools and neighborhoods. Their learning had meaning and it made a visible difference. The school had helped the Cambodian families belong. The Cambodians, in turn, had helped this school become a community of learners. Not a bad substitute for the logic of lists.

Many conditions appear to foster this kind of profound learning: acknowledging one's inadequacies, posing one's own problems, risk taking, humor, collaboration with other learners, compassion, the importance of modeling, and the presence of a moral purpose. It is surprising to me how these and other conditions associated with learning attract so little attention from list makers and how infrequently they appear in schools where learning is, after all, supposed to be the dominant feature.

Communities of learners seem to be committed above all to discovering conditions that elicit and support human learning and to providing these conditions. Whereas many attempts to improve schools dwell on monitoring adult behavior, on controlling students, on the assurance of student achievement, and on the visible attainment of prescribed skills, the central question for a community of learners is not, What should students, teachers, and principals know and do, and how do we get them to know and do it? Instead the underlying question is, Under what conditions will principal and student and teacher become serious, committed, sustained, lifelong, cooperative learners?

A community of learners seems to work from assumptions fundamentally different from those of the list makers:

- Schools have the capacity to improve themselves, if the conditions are right. A major responsibility of those outside the schools is to help provide these conditions for those inside.
- When the need and the purpose is there, when the conditions are right, adults and students alike learn and each energizes and contributes to the learning of the other.
- What needs to be improved about schools is their culture, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences.
- School improvement is an effort to determine and provide, from without and within, conditions under which the adults and youngsters who inhabit schools will promote and sustain learning among themselves.

Taking these assumptions seriously leads to some fresh thinking about the culture of schools and about what people do in them. For instance, the principal need no longer be the "headmaster" or "instructional leader," pretending to know all, one who consumes lists from above and transmits them to those below. The more crucial role of the principal is as *head learner*, engaging in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse—experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating what it is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do.

As a participant in one principals' center put it, "Since I've joined the center and given serious attention to my own learning, I've noticed that teachers in my building have become much more committed to their own staff development." Much is important for teachers and principals to know. However, *that* a teacher or principal is learning something is probably far more important to the creation of a culture of learning in a school than any list of *what* a teacher or principal should know.

Teachers in a learning community, such as the Prospect School in Bennington, Vermont, are not "inserviced." Instead, they engage in continuous inquiry about teaching. They are researchers, students of teaching, who observe others teach, have others observe them, talk about teaching, and help other teachers. In short, they are professionals. Colleagues helping one another provides a powerful source of recognition and respect both for the helpers and for those who are helped. And teachers find that, when they engage in serious learning themselves, their students take learning more seriously. As one teacher put it: "Learning is not something like chicken pox, a childhood disease that makes you itch for a while and then leaves you immune for the rest of your life!"

Implicit in many of the lists of school reforms is a vision of school as a place where students learn and adults teach, where the role of educators is to serve, not be served. Because schools and those who work in them are accountable for pupils' achievement and because no amount of pupil achievement is sufficient to place every student in the top half of the class, pupil learning usually preempts adult learning. Yet only a school that is hospitable to adult learning can be a good place for students to learn. A community of learners implies that school is a context for everyone's lifelong growth, not just for growth among K-12 students. Adult learning is not only a means toward the end of student learning, but also an important objective in its own right. Educators would do well to ponder Elizabeth Cady Stanton's injunction that self-development is a higher duty than self-sacrifice.

Many lists pose the questions, problems, and tasks that those in schools are expected to address. Lists have also specified who has responsibility for monitoring these tasks—the state department for school systems, the superintendent for principals, the principal for teachers, and the teacher for pupils. In a community of learners, on the other hand, a different set of relationships prevails. Adults and youngsters often pose their own questions and enlist colleagues as resources to both help answer them and verify the answers.

Educators' preoccupation with lists seems to be bucking increasingly heavy tides these days as teachers and principals, behaving more like goats than sheep, become adept at circumventing prescriptions, and as empowerment, confidence in school-based management, and local decision making increase.

The notion of the school as a community of learners may be moving with a different tide, but it, too, is accompanied by a host of tough questions. How can we overcome the taboo that prevents teachers from making themselves, their ideas, and their teaching visible to other teachers? How can principals become active learners when learning implies deficiency? How can students learn to work more cooperatively and less competitively? Can we have more and higher standards for adults and students without more standardization? In what ways can those outside the schools, by working with those within the schools, contribute to the development of a community of learners? Where do legitimacy and accountability come from? How can we unlock the extraordinary idealism, vision, and energy that are sealed within teachers and principals and students? And how can a conception such as a community of learners avoid becoming yet another set of prescriptions, another list to be imposed on teachers, principals, and students?

However, unlike the problems of transforming goats into sheep and sheep into goats, I find that trying to answer questions such as these is invigorating both for young people and for the adults charged with educating them. And the process leads to the improvement of our schools. Let us consider some of these questions as we turn to the topic of the teacher and principal as learners.

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On Building Learning Communities: A Conversation with Hank Levin

Ron Brandt

Schools once considered dumping grounds for at-risk students can transform themselves into vital places where kids and teachers want to be.

The New York Times recently named nine educators "The Standard Bearers," leaders nationally known for educational innovation. Henry M. Levin, Stanford professor of education and of economics, was one of them. Levin's educational vision is to accelerate the learning of disadvantaged children—to bring at-risk students into the academic mainstream by the end of their elementary school years. Today 300 schools in 25 states are pursuing the cost-effective Accelerated Schools model he has developed.

What makes The Accelerated Schools model different from some other programs for at-risk students?

What may be most unusual is that we believe the teaching-learning approach that works best for at-risk kids is a "gifted and talented" strategy rather than a remedial approach.

That's a very unusual idea.

Yes, here's how it came about. In the early '80s I was asked by a Philadelphia group called Public/Private Ventures—they work with training of disadvantaged youth—to try to understand what was happening with at-risk students. At that time we were starting to see all these reports: *A Nation at Risk* and so on. The reports talked mostly about secondary school students; about their not doing high-quality academic work and of the need for higher standards. Most of them never talked about elementary schools or at-risk kids.

So we started to go around to find out what was happening. We did demographic research and so on. For me the most important thing was simply going to schools—not to look at reports, not to look at data—but simply to look with fresh eyes directly at the schools. The point was not to be critical, but just to try to understand.

Well, we found that most principals were spending 80 percent of their time doing two things: discipline and compliance. Their mental energy was sapped, and they didn't have time for instructional leadership. When we looked at classrooms, we saw that kids were mainly doing worksheets. They were bored, and the teachers were bored too. If you asked them about the kids, all you would hear was what was wrong with them. They didn't use the word "defective," but basically that's how they viewed these kids. I'd ask teachers, "Give me three words that describe your at-risk students," and all the words would be negative: the kids act out, they're not well-prepared, and so on. The idea was they needed lots of remedial work.

Now, some of these schools had gifted and talented programs, and if I asked those teachers to describe their students, they'd use glowing terms. And if I asked what kind of curriculum those kids needed, the answer was always hands-on programs, enrichment, acceleration, things like that.

What I started to see was that the way you define children has an awful lot to do with the way you work with them. So as we started to work with these so-called at-risk kids, we asked, "Do these kids have any talents or gifts? Do they have any strengths?" And we found that if we just asked the right questions, these kids would get excited, their eyes would twinkle. We'd put a piece of paper in front of 2nd or 3rd graders and say, "Write a paragraph that's so interesting I'll have to show it to other people"—and they would write. They'd use inventive spelling, but they were writing, even though the curriculum they were being taught didn't expect them to do much writing.

The way you define children has an awful lot to do with the way you work with them.

Well, I started to do a lot of reading in the research literature, and in the literature on gifted and talented programs, and I was convinced that if we exposed all children to the richest experiences—but also connected schools, Dewey-style, with the children's experiences, their culture, and their community—we could bring kids into the mainstream. And we'd find that a lot of these kids *were* gifted and talented, even in the traditional sense.

So what did you do?

I went to three schools that were considered the worst schools in their districts—everyone said so; they'd use words like "dumping grounds." But in each of those schools I saw some things that I wouldn't have expected to see, given the school's reputation. I saw teachers who, although they were struggling to keep up with the formal curriculum and the stuff that the publishers put out, had good ideas and were doing some very interesting things on their own. So I said, "Wait a minute. Let's not talk only about building on the strengths of students. We'd better start talking about strengths of teachers and other staff." You know, it troubled me to hear all the talk about finding better people to be teachers when I saw teachers with a lot of talent. The problem was it was being underutilized.

And the third group we found consistently underrated were parents. Quite frankly, the schools we went to looked at parents as a negative influence—"they don't participate; they don't care about the kid's education"—and yet, again, we saw some exceptional things being done by people with a 5th-grade education. So basically we put it all together to create the kind of school that builds on everyone's strengths. Another way to say it is that schools have far more resources than they may think they have.

A lot of people might say that's unrealistic.

It's true that you can't expect to see what I'm talking about in most existing schools. First you have to transform the school so that everyone is in a position to make informed decisions.

How do you do that? How do you transform a school?

Well, here's an example. An experienced ethnographer studied one of our middle schools last year. She was skeptical because she knew the research on school culture, which says you don't change culture easily. After eight months of intensive observation and interviewing she came away convinced that these schools transform culture from the inside. She calls it "the internal transformation of culture." What we do is plant the seed and offer the philosophy that people in the school decide to try, and as they succeed with the philosophy, it turns things around.

This school had been the bottom middle school in San Jose, California —not just in terms of test scores, either. They have a magnet schools program for desegregation, and this school just couldn't attract students. It was considered too dangerous: kids fight there, no one gets an education, and so on. This year prior to becoming an Accelerated School, it had 540 students. This year (1992-93), the school's third year in the program, they are above capacity with 770.

That's amazing to make such a dramatic change so fast—and it's a very interesting measure of success.

The students in the school, who are mostly poor minority kids, go through a special 6th grade enriched mathematics course. In 7th grade every student must take pre-algebra, and in the 8th grade every student must take algebra. That's a big change because just a year ago, at the beginning of the process, only about 20 percent of the students were taking algebra. Teachers were sure that the other kids couldn't do algebra; they needed remedial work. Now the teachers are saying, "My gosh, these kids can learn algebra!" That doesn't mean every student is doing well at this point, but about 75 percent of all the kids are succeeding in algebra. The school will continue to work on it, until they get 100 percent of the kids to succeed.

And this change took place in just two years?

Yes. And it's not only good for students. It makes a much better professional life for the teachers. Our view is, by the way, that if you can't make a school a great professional place for its staff, it's never going to be a great place for kids. So the teachers are finding all kinds of wonderful new ways to teach algebra, ways you don't find in books. And the kids are turned on. One little problem they have is that the kids don't want to put covers on their algebra books; they want people to see they're taking algebra!

It sounds as if you can tell how well these schools are doing by what you see going on.

Absolutely. The first thing you see is that it's just a nice place to be—for kids and for adults. People are smiling; they're talking. There's a "can do" attitude.

You see a lot of parents in the school. Many of our schools—and these are in the inner city—will have 20 volunteers at any particular time of the day. You see a tremendous increase in other kinds of parent involvement. Typically, we'll start with 20-30 percent of parents coming to parent-teacher conferences. Two or three years later, it's rare to have any classroom with fewer than 95 percent parents showing up. I say "parents," but some of them are not actually parents; they're family representatives. We've had similar gains in participation at major school events such as back-to-school night.

As for teachers, you see them talking all the time about professional matters: how to deal with problems or professional things they want to share—not only at formal meetings, but in lunchroom conversations and so on.

And the students?

Well, these are noisy schools; there's a lot of oral language taking place. Even if these kids have not been read to, or don't know the alphabet, they can communicate. So there's word-building going on. The kids love big vocabularies. You don't like the way a kid says something? No problem, because kids love new words. And these words become the building blocks for the transition to writing in the early grades.

That's what you mean by building on strengths.

Right. When you start looking at what these kids can do, you see that they are very vocal, they talk a lot. True, they use a lot of slang, and they don't speak correctly in some middle-class sense. But they're also very curious. They want to learn things. And they want to own things; they want to own books they've written, things they've made.

The inevitable question is—yes, but what about test scores?

By the time our schools hit the fourth year or so, we see very dramatic improvement in the test scores. But test scores are a byproduct, not the goal.

You're saying you see indicators of success both in the conventional measures and in other ways, too.

Right. We recognize the reality that if you do well on the test scores, your school district gets off your back with a lot of the compliance stuff. And that's valuable, because it reaffirms that you're a professional community that cares and can make decisions.

One little problem they have is that the kids don't want to put covers on their algebra books; they want people to see they're taking algebra!

Is your program expensive?

No. Most of our schools have done it on their existing budgets, because most of it is inservice, which just involves reallocating the staff development days and budget. The most any school has spent that I know of is about $30 per student in the first year, less the second year, and almost nothing additional after that. We've never had a school that said, after they found out about the program, "We can't do it because we can't come up with the money."

Now, I want to be very careful here. I am a very strong advocate for more funding for schools; there are tremendous unmet needs in these schools.

You're not saying they don't need more money.

I'm just saying that it shouldn't be an excuse not to get started.

Say a little more about how this can take place in such a short time.

Well, we have a very definite process. Here's where we differ substantially from some other movements. Ted Sizer, for example, believes that an outsider shouldn't prescribe a particular process; that every school must generate its own.

So you don't have a program, but you do have a process.

Yes. Let's say a superintendent contacts us and says, "Hank, we'd like three schools to be Accelerated Schools."

Yes, I wanted to ask about that. What would happen?

We have some very strict rules, including no telling people what to do. All of our staff members are trained to ask questions. So I would say, "That's great; do those three schools know about it?" And the typical answer might be, "Oh yeah, I called Bill and Ted and Patty and told them, 'You're going to be an Accelerated School next year—here's an article to read.' "

Well, I would explain that we really don't work that way. We believe it takes five or six years to transform a school fully (although good things will begin to happen right away), and that's asking an awful lot of people's lives.

So I explain that we'll send a 25-minute video, and we ask each of the schools to have the full staff watch it—along with parent representatives, and student representatives if it's a middle school. We ask them to look at it and discuss, "What does this mean to us? How would that work here? What do we like about it? What don't we like about it?"—to decide what the school wants to do.

Then, only after an informed debate, we ask them to take a vote. And for the school to be accepted we require an affirmative vote from 80 percent or more of the entire school community, including the custodians, cafeteria workers, secretaries, student representatives, and parent representatives.

> I am convinced that if we exposed all children to the richest experiences—but also connected schools, Dewey-style, with the children's experiences, their culture, and their community—we could bring kids into the mainstream.

Some people who work with schools might doubt that you'd ever get 80 percent to vote for anything.

We have a very friendly philosophy. But it's very powerful, too. One thing we say is that a school—the one we are working in—isn't good enough until it's good enough for our own children. In fact it's not only that it must be good enough for our child but that it's the *dream school* we want for our children.

When we work on a vision for the school, the staff members constantly ask themselves, "Is this the kind of math work we'd like our own kids to be doing? Is this the kind of music program, art program we'd want? Are we doing enough challenging work, with kids doing research, doing hands-on work?" Most of us wouldn't be satisfied if our kids were in the 95th percentile but coming home from school bored, not being challenged. It's the most powerful professional criterion you can use: "Is this what we'd want for our own children?"

You said there was showing of a video and then a vote and so on. Can you say a little more about the rest of the process?

Well, after the vote, we ask for a letter with the signatures of all the people who voted to move ahead. We want them to take this quite seriously. And then we schedule training. Now, we used to train only a school team of 7 to 10 people, but it was hard for those teams to convince their colleagues. So now we've gone to "full school training": the entire staff gets five full inservice days and about five half days of the first year and training as needed after that. The facilitator visits the school weekly or biweekly to listen to the quality of the decision making and to intervene if necessary; to do trouble-shooting and coaching.

I'd call the process "problem-based learning"; we get the staff immediately involved in dealing with the challenges they face in their school. We train them in an inquiry and problem-solving approach that we've been working on for the last five years. It's a lot of fun, but it requires some deep thinking.

They start by taking stock of their school in small committees. They decide what dimensions of the school they want to look at—but they have to look for strengths; that's very important. The process is quite different from a needs assessment, by the way; everyone is involved, including classified staff. It ends with a big "taking stock" report and a celebration.

We move from taking stock to developing a deep vision of the future. This is not just a one-day inservice; it typically takes weeks or months and involves reflection, deep thinking. We work around two key questions, one of which I've already mentioned: "Design as fully as possible the dream school you would want for your own child or your grandchild, a child very dear to you." We ask them to portray it in artistic ways; they get very excited about that. And they write a vision statement—but that's really the least important part. Because in the research some of us did in the early '80s, we saw hundreds of schools with mission statements but no mission, and vision statements with no vision. So our concern is whether they have a vision in their *hearts* and a set of beliefs that drive their daily behavior.

At that point, they have what we call "here." And they have "there"—where they're going to be. We're realistic, by the way. We tell them it's going to take five or six years to get there. The question is, where do they start? Now in most schools, they'll say, "We've got to work on everything at once." We tell them, "No, let's list everything that has to be accomplished—but no school is going to make significant progress in more than three or four things while still serving students, so you have to set priorities."

So, people make pleas for different things and offer their rationales, trying to persuade their colleagues. They take straw polls and finally choose three or four goals. Around each priority we ask people to select working cadres, typically no more than eight or nine people. And the real work goes on when these small groups start to do research, start to do problem solving, using an inquiry process specifically designed for Accelerated Schools. There's a steering committee for coordination—and, of course, there's the "school as a whole."

What's that?

It's everyone who has a legitimate interest in the school community. The cadres meet once a week because they're working groups; the steering committee once every two weeks or so, because they're there for coordination, acting on recommendations, and so on; and the school as a whole might meet once a quarter for a review of what's been accomplished, support for some big recommendations that are going to affect the whole school, and for a big celebration.

Oh—and when they eventually come out with solutions, you know who's responsible for implementation and assessment? They are. They don't just go to the central office and say, "Here's what we want." They don't turn to Sacramento or Albany or Washington. *They* are responsible.

Okay, but some people interpret site-based decision making as schools doing everything on their own. You don't mean that, do you?

No. For example, Accelerated Schools need specific types of support from the central office—I might say a *restructured* central office. They need technical assistance, help with staff development, assessment, and so on. Still, the school is responsible—and not just for making decisions.

What you've said is impressive and challenging. But many at-risk children do have limited backgrounds. It must be difficult for teachers and other staff members to change expectations that come from years of experience.

That's true—and it applies just as much to expectations for parents. Whenever we begin working with a new school, there is always skepticism. Many of these schools have only 2-3 percent of parents showing up for back-to-school night; 20 percent for parent-teacher conferences. Understandably, the teachers are disheartened. So we say, "Can you think of any strengths on which to build?" Typically, they can't. We say, "Well, do you think these parents want these kids to succeed in life?" That's kind of a dumb question. Of course they do. "Do you think they love their kids?" Of course they do. "Can you think of any ways that you could take those two strengths and do something as a test?"

The first school I worked in—this is a school with 600 kids, 90 percent minority, very poor—they had 17 parents come to back-to-school night—and 7 of them left after they ate. If you ever saw teachers who had no faith in parents, there they were. The next year, as they were planning another back-to-school night, they said, "We don't agree with you—we don't believe we can get parents interested—but we'll test it by adding to our notice for back-to-school night that there will be a short presentation on 'How to Help Your Child Succeed with Homework.'" Well, 175 parents showed up. We had to run out for more coffee and doughnuts.

The point is that, as you reinforce positive expectations, people start to believe them. We don't start by changing attitudes; we start by changing behavior: asking the staff to try things. And *they've* got to work them out. We don't tell them precisely what to do; we just outline general principles. But then—as the school begins to succeed—it takes on a life of its own. ■

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Solving Conflicts— Not Just for Children

Marge Scherer

Adults are the essential link. They must master the skills of solving conflict peaceably in order to teach these skills to children.

It is a beautiful summer day and the New York high school teachers and counselors are sitting around the table waiting for their conflict resolution training to begin. A participant in one small group has not yet arrived, and there's a dollar bet that she will not show up. Why not? Because the role play last session—where half the group played administrators and the other half teachers—had turned ugly. The now-absent teacher had told a colleague she thought he was acting like "a typical administrator." He had responded by telling her she had "a weak personality" and was unused to thinking on her feet.

Personal putdowns are not an unusual way for adults to respond to conflict, according to Ellen Raider, training director of the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Teachers College, Columbia University. Raider, who has trained thousands of teachers and managers in negotiation skills, says that adults often tend to confuse negotiation with debate. Afraid of being taken advantage of, they tend to either lash out or back away from conflict. (See "Typical Responses to Conflict," p. 16).

"When children don't know how to handle conflict, they fight," Raider says. "Adults are 'civilized' and typically respond with verbal attacks." Children or adults who behave in these ways find it increasingly difficult to arrive at cooperative agreement because their conflict festers or escalates.

All of this is borne out when the teacher in question arrives. ("I never thought of not coming; I need this training," she says.) Her antagonist of the previous session elaborately offers her a chair. The tension between them has now gone underground, and they will avoid each other for the rest of the day.

One of the purposes of this training is to instill humility in the adults who will soon be teaching negotiation skills to students, Raider notes. Without practice in using such skills as "opening" (getting information about the needs and values of the other side) or "informing" (stating your own needs), procedures can sound pat and simplistic. "You think it's easy to teach these strategies to kids, but if you haven't mastered the techniques yourself, the kids will think you're patronizing them," she says. In reality, as the teachers at this workshop agree, learning these skills, then teaching them to others, is an immense task.

Conflicts in the Schools

A tragedy last February in a Brooklyn high school made the need to prevent conflicts from escalating even more compelling. Just a few hours before the mayor of New York was scheduled to visit their school, two teens were shot dead by a classmate.

In the wake of one of the worst incidents of violence in a New York City school building, Mayor Dinkins and Chancellor Fernandez allocated money from the Safe Streets, Safe Schools initiative to broaden the schools' ongoing conflict resolution program. The Board of Education mandated—and allocated funds for—10 days of training each for 2 educators from each of the district's 140 high schools.

The training—to take place over a year's time—includes 7 days of

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training in negotiation skills for an educator designated to begin a pilot curriculum, 7 days in mediation techniques for an educator who will open a mediation center in the high school, plus 6 one-half day sessions for each, to take place while they are implementing the programs with students. In addition, trainers will be "on call" to participants during the training and afterwards.[1]

On the whole, teachers who are being trained or who are already using the conflict resolution model with students believe in the need for the program and see its potential in the schools.

"I'm looking for a better way to deal with student discipline problems," Al Kalaydjian, an administrator from Brooklyn, says, "Kids are getting violent with one another for rolling their eyes. They're knifing each other for sucking their teeth. In the old days, when kids fought, you separated them and threatened them with suspension. Now kids say, 'Go ahead and suspend me.' Suspension doesn't mean much anymore." He adds, "I have faith in the process of getting students to talk with one another. It's the only method I've seen work."

"The tensions of the cities play themselves out in schools," says Stanley Denton, director of Multicultural Education for Pittsburgh Public Schools, whose district has invested in the same kind of training being offered in New York. The traditional way of dealing with conflict is the power play, he says. "Teachers intervene in students' conflicts, telling them how to solve the problem rather than helping them solve the problem themselves. Parents come to school to solve students' problems and go over the teacher's head to the principal to yell about the teacher. Nobody practices negotiation because we haven't been taught to negotiate. We practice conflict. It's the typical American way. When we want to solve a problem, we go to court."

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Typical Responses to Conflict

Morton Deutsch

Conflict frequently evokes anxiety. In clinical work, I have found that the anxiety is often based either on an unconscious fear of being overwhelmed in the face of the other's aggression or on the fear of being so angry that one will destroy the other. Different people deal with their anxieties about conflict in different ways. Being aware of one's predispositions may allow one to modify them when they are inappropriate in a given conflict. Following are six dimensions of conflict response.

- *Conflict avoidance—conflict involvement.* Conflict avoidance is expressed in denial, repression, suppression, and continuing postponement of facing the conflict. Sometimes it is evidenced by fleeing into an agreement before exploring conflicting interests and various options for resolving the conflict. The tension associated with conflict avoidance is expressed in fatigue, irritability, muscular tension, and a sense of malaise. On the other side of the coin, excessive involvement in conflict is expressed in a "macho" attitude, a chip on one's shoulder, a tendency to seek out conflict to demonstrate that one is not afraid of conflict. It is also commonly manifested in obsessive thoughts about fights and disputes, with much rehearsing of moves and countermoves between oneself and one's adversaries. A healthier predisposition is a readiness to confront conflict when it arises without needing to seek it out or to be preoccupied with it.

- *Hard—soft.* Some people take an aggressive, unyielding response to conflict, fearing that otherwise they will be taken advantage of. Others fear they will be considered to be hostile or presumptuous and, as a consequence, are excessively gentle and unassertive. They often expect the other to "read their minds." A more appropriate stance is a firm support of one's own interests combined with a ready responsiveness to the interests of the other.

- *Rigid—loose.* Some people immediately seek to organize and to control the situation by setting the agenda. As a consequence of feeling threatened by the unexpected, they push for rigid arrangements and rules and get upset by even minor deviations. At the other extreme are people who are aversive to anything formal or constricting. They like a loose, improvisational arrangement in which rules and procedures are implicit rather than overt. An approach that allows for both orderliness and flexibility in dealing with the conflict is more constructive than one that is either compulsive in its organizing or in its rejection of orderliness.

- *Intellectual—emotional.* At one extreme, no relevant emotion is felt or expressed as one communicates one's thoughts. Frequently, beneath the calm, detached surface is the fear that if one feels or expresses one's emotions, one will do something destructive or humiliating. However, the lack of appropriate emotional expressiveness may convey to the other a lack of commitment to one's interests and a lack of genuine concern for the other's interests. At the other extreme are people who believe that only feelings are real and that words and ideas are not to be taken seriously unless they are thoroughly soaked in emotion. The emotional intensity of such people impairs the ability to mutually explore ideas and to develop creative solutions; it also makes it difficult to distinguish the significant from the insignificant, if even the trivial is accompanied with intense emotion. The ideal mode of communication combines thought and affect: the thought is supported by the affect and the affect is explained by the thought.

- *Escalating—minimizing.* At one extreme, some people experience any given conflict in the largest possible terms. The issues are cast so that what is at stake involves one's self, one's family, one's ethnic group, and precedence for all time. Escalation of the conflict makes it more difficult to resolve except when the escalation proceeds so rapidly that its absurdity becomes self-apparent. At the other extreme are people who minimize their conflicts. Yet, by minimizing the seriousness of the differences between the self and the other, they can produce serious misunderstandings. They may not devote enough effort to resolving the conflict constructively.

- *Compulsively revealing—compulsively concealing.* At one extreme, some people feel compelled to reveal whatever they think and feel about the other, including their hostilities and fears, in the most blunt, irrational manner. Or they may feel they have to communicate every doubt or weakness they have about themselves. At the other extreme are those who feel they cannot reveal any of their feelings or thoughts without seriously damaging their relationship to the other. Either extreme can impair the development of a constructive relationship. One should be open and honest in communication but, appropriately so, taking into account the consequences of what one says or does not say. ■

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Basic Negotiation Skills

- Check whether you understand the other person correctly and whether he or she understands you.
- Tell the other person what you think; don't try to read another's mind or tell others what you think they think.
- Talk about needs, feelings, and interests, instead of restating opposing positions.
- Recognize negotiable conflicts and avoid non-negotiable ones.
- Know how you tend to deal with most conflicts and recognize others' styles.
- Put yourself in the other's shoes.
- Understand how anger affects your ability to handle conflict and learn how to avoid violence even when you're angry.
- Reframe the issues; talk about them in other ways to find more common ground between yourself and the other person.
- Criticize what people say rather than who or what they are.
- Seek win-win solutions, not compromises; find solutions where all parties get what they need, rather than solutions where all get some of what they need.

Pittsburgh staff members decided to first train teachers and administrators in the techniques and then to teach students negotiation skills in all health classes. Their rationale was that in addition to being of daily use in settling disputes, negotiation skills could help students achieve academically.

"Often the level of learning is keyed to how the students feel about the teachers," Denton says. A typical case might be that of a student who refuses to do anything in class. His belief that "the teacher is prejudiced toward me" is manifested in a certain work style. When he and the teacher, who has repeatedly warned the student that he will fail if he doesn't start working, consent to a negotiation process, they both agree to participate as equal players, first stating their position, then probing for the underlying needs of the other.

This second part of the procedure is the hardest, says New York staff development trainer Harriet Lenk, because participants will state their needs directly only if they trust one another. It is doubly difficult because they might not know exactly what their needs are. A subtle questioning technique, rather than demanding "Why do you feel that way?", is much more likely to lead to insight.

For instance, the teacher might ask, "What would you like me to do to improve things between us?" Especially in the case of younger students, the teacher is often surprised that the solution the student most wants is not that difficult to achieve. Denton gives the example of a student who asked to be called by name and to "let me take the roll book to the principal." The teacher's reply: " I can do that." In return, the teacher was able to negotiate with the child "not to call me or other students names and to cooperate in class." Both teacher and student were relieved because they could each back off from the old relationship and begin to forge a new one.

Overcoming Resistance

While teachers can gain as much as students from practicing conflict resolution procedures, it is difficult to sell them on the benefits until they actually try them, says Carole Grau, who with Principal Allen Leibowitz opened a Mediation Center in New Utrecht High School in New York in 1987 after the murder of local youth Yusuf Hawkins rocked the community.

"When we began this, teachers thought conflict resolution was a panacea and suspected it could be detrimental to their classroom management techniques," Grau says. "They didn't want to be perceived as not being able to handle discipline problems." Observing students participating in "facilitated negotiations"—that is, those mediated by an objective peer representative for each side—began to convince them of the benefits to students.

New Utrecht trained a crew of student volunteers to be mediators, thereby helping two groups: the disputants and the mediators. "What makes it attractive to students is that it's an empowerment. They are so used to relinquishing their power to authority figures. They desperately want to be listened to, and not just be provided an answer," Grau says. "Teachers see the value of just two humans telling each other about the issues, attempting to come to resolution. They see that they do not give up their status in the classroom just because they agree to negotiate a specific issue."

The results convince them the process works. In three years New Utrecht High School saw the number of suspensions go down from 51 to 20 per year. *Mediator* has become a term of respect, and more and more students refer themselves to the Mediation Center for help in resolving problems.

From Conflict, Collaboration

The need for conflict resolution training is increasing with the emphasis today on site-based management. Those engaged in collaborative decision making note that the process often breaks down as soon as conflicts break out.

Such was the case in Beach Channel High School in Queens, described by Principal Sandra Hassan as "a community school, open 24 hours a day." Yet while middle-class lifestyle seems to predominate, the school community is diverse—41 percent black, 35 percent white, and 24 percent Hispanic, with the various groups tending to stay separate from one another.

When site-based management was proposed, it almost didn't get off the ground, Hassan relates. Two sides emerged: One group felt that the team

Two-Day Conference on Conflict

ASCD is hosting a two-day workshop, "Conflict Resolution for Site-Based Management," November 5-6 in Washington, D.C.

This institute will present an overview of site-based management, essential conflict resolution concepts, and skills needed in the restructuring process. Participants will analyze videotapes of actual site-based-management conflicts and practice role-plays to assess their own skills.

This two-day institute costs $240 for ASCD members and $310 for nonmembers. For additional information, contact Karla Bingman, (703) 549-9110 ext. 307.

composition should be based on academic departments and not on race or ethnicity. The other side insisted that any site-based management team must reflect the cultural diversity of the student body.

What had begun as an effort to create a more participative community became a racial conflict. The predominantly white group thought that those insisting on racial representation were telling them they could not possibly represent all students, that in effect they were not good teachers. The predominantly black group thought that shared decision making would be a sham if the group that held power did not represent all races and cultures.

In the face of this deadlock, both sides agreed to bring in a professional mediator who would help them understand conflict and work through their own discord. An ad hoc committee made up of an equal number of representatives from each side met, first venting opinions and misconceptions, gradually seeing the situation through the other's lens, then brainstorming possible solutions.

The group's eventual decision was to create a Multicultural Task Force of seven teachers appointed by the principal, reflective of the cultural diversity of students. In addition to its own work, this task force has two permanent seats on the Site-Based Management team.

It took a whole year, says Ellen Raider, who acted as mediator, before the opposing groups heard what each other was saying. Meanwhile, the naysayers of site-based management called the whole process a waste of money. "It was a very interesting and complex situation," she says.

But the solution is working, Hassan reports. The Site-Based Management team has written a constitution and makes all decisions by consensus, with each of its 27 members having equal veto power. Together the team has tackled such issues as how to computerize the school to best integrate the curriculum. Its next endeavor will be to solve the discipline problem created by the fact that the school has 54 exits. (It is shaped like a star and situated on the tip of Jamaica Bay.) "We don't just want to promulgate rules. We want students to learn self-control," Hassan says. She's quite sure there will be dissenting opinions about what should be done.

"Some say collaborative negotiation is a waste of time," Hassan says, "but it's interesting, when some issue is of particular interest to *them*, they do want to participate in the decision. As a principal, the hardest thing for me is to take a back seat. My instinct is to take over. But if collaboration is to work, you must learn to hear different sides. It's funny—when there are many minds in the room, sometimes you do get convinced."

Dissension is part of the the collaborative process, and conflict, an everyday event. Adults—and children—need to learn how to deal with both effectively. "We are social mobilizers," Ellen Raider tells fellow trainers. "Ten days of training is not enough, but it's a beginning. We teach the skills to teachers; they take it back to others." ■

Resources

Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School's Student Mediation Program
John Silva
Coordinator
Cambridge Rindge and
Latin High School
459 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 349-6772

Educators for Social Responsibility (New York)
475 Riverside Dr., Room 450
New York, NY 10115
(212) 870-3318

Educators for Social Responsibility (National Office)
23 Garden St.
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 492-1764

Ellen Raider International
1 Millbrook Rd.
New Paltz, NY 12561
(914) 255-5174

International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution
Box 53
Teachers College
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-3402

National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME)
425 Amity St.
Amherst, MA 01002
(413) 545-2462

School Initiatives Program Community Board Center for Policy and Training
1540 Market St.
Suite 490
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 552-1250

Marge Scherer is Managing Editor of *Educational Leadership.*

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[1] The ICCCR also offers a 20-day program over a two-year period. The program includes 5 sessions on negotiation, 5 on mediation, 5 lessons during which participants learn how to train colleagues, and 5 days of clinical supervision when trainers help participants implement the program with students. A certificate program to train specialists in conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, and collaborative process skills is in the proposal stage.

SECTION III

Using the Community as a Resource

by Pat Howlett

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Garnering Community Support with Effective Communication

> *. . . schools have been perceived as one place where the differing masses might be merged — or at least brought together in a working relationship.*

Community. It's a word whose meaning has grown increasingly complex as America has grown increasingly complex. Once-homogeneous clusters of races, religions, cultures, languages and dialects have become mosaics of variations. "And we are the richer and more beautiful for the variations," say our differing citizens.

On the other hand, there are cries of "too much change" and "lack of togetherness." People feel estranged from their neighbors and refuse to reach out to unknowns. "There is no community any more."

Through the transition to this faster-paced world, America's schools have been perceived as one place where the differing masses might be merged — or at least brought together in a working relationship. Be it labor and management, different languages or cultures, or expectations of students and their parents, somehow differences aren't supposed to count in classrooms.

The neighborhood schoolhouse — be it one room or a four-story building — is perceived as the best place to meld our masses, to provide a commonality strong enough to weave a strong country fabric from a variety of independent strands. Today the real challenge to school leaders is to respect and capitalize on differences at the same time that they weave them together to form the whole.

So how's a busy person supposed to relate to the needs and preferences of individuals while serving the common need for good education? One tool makes the job possible: effective communication. That is, communi-

Pat Howlett is ACSA Director of Communications.

. . . the real challenge to school leaders is to respect and capitalize on differences at the same time that they weave them together to form the whole.

cation that expresses the common community good in terms that appeal to individual differences. More specifically, communication that sends a message in different ways so each community member may relate to it with enthusiasm.

Leaders seeking a top-notch community relations program must follow three ground rules:

1. **Really know your community.** Read the census report and get demographics from the election office. (Monitor public debate about the process to be used taking the 1990 census. At stake is the validity of our Asian and Spanish speaking populations.) Study newspapers and listen to local radio broadcasts. Attend or send representatives to local functions. Keep up with changing times and social issues. The local planning commission's problems are indicative of and important to community change whether they are in your immediate neighborhood or across town.

In addition to statistical facts and figures, pay attention to the community's perceptions, its shifting focuses and people's feelings about them. LISTEN to everyone about absolutely everything, and learn to care about what's bothering them. Seek out and get to know those individuals who are the keys to understanding your community. Those keys may be barristers, barbers, bartenders or members of the clergy, but if they are in touch with "the people," organizational leaders need to know who they are and what their ears-to-the-ground are picking up.

Put those key people on your mailing lists and ask them to react to your messages. Schedule occasional meetings with them to hear firsthand what is being said.

2. **Target your communications.** The days of one message to all are gone, as even

Ideas For Starting a Community Relations Program.

Could you . . .

- Have a volunteer group such as music boosters?
- Hold activities with and for senior citizens?
- Regularly furnish news reports to local media?
- Conduct field trips to community sites?
- Circulate reports and information at public meetings?
- Sponsor reading workshops for parents to help kids?
- Publish newsletters?
- Have an organized plan for communications to parents?
- Provide parent orientation?
- Broadcast school radio or television programs?
- Schedule fundraisers?
- Run special people days for grandparents, realtors, merchants?
- Maintain a message board?
- Have a systematic program for response to critics?
- Send congratulatory messages to local leaders and supporters?
- Hold an annual business-education function?
- Participate in collection programs for the poor?
- Use a key contact program encouraging monthly contact between managers and community thought leaders?
- Cooperate in running a recycling depot?
- Sponsor a students' community help group?
- Invite community group participation for special days?
- Plan special events to get nonparents to open houses?
- Encourage staff to participate in community events?
- Encourage adopt-a-school (or class or activity) programs?
- Sponsor community exhibits — such as student art shows?
- Conduct grade-level curriculum reviews for local citizens?
- Offer mini-courses covering parenting concerns?
- Involve parents in health services of the school?
- Hold "swap" days when adults and students exchange roles?
- Schedule neighborhood coffee klatches to talk about schools?
- Give public relations training to staff members, PTA leaders?
- Encourage and cooperate with advisory committees?
- Hold creative assembly or lunch programs and invite community people?
- Sponsor community forums about school issues?
- Conduct regular community polls and respond to findings?
- Encourage public endorsements of school programs by non-educator citizens?

. . . it is the job of school leaders to present a clear connection with their cause and the citizen's best interests.

the big three networks have learned. America is moving from broadcasting to narrowcasting, and advertising agencies can buy mailing labels to target neighborhoods peopled by the consumer values and lifestyles their clients want to reach.

An effective community relations program issues messages designed to stimulate interest, reassure, prod to action or just inform each of its audiences, and it delivers those messages in the way that the audience will best be served. A face-to-face meeting is a must when the message is of personal importance. However, strangers who have no personal stake, only a communal interest in the message, are better served by a factual letter addressing the general topic. An announcement in the media is just fine as a secondary message to reinforce the primary one.

A letter to one community group should not be worded the same as that aimed at a second group, though. Senior citizens may be encouraged to support a new school by a letter describing adult courses and recreation programs scheduled into senior communities. The Chamber of Commerce, on the other hand, will be much more enthusiastic about a new school's importance by what it might offer in career education and job training for the local work force.

One of the greatest boons of the computer age is the ability to adapt correspondence to provide selective messages, and it is a technique that the business world has adopted much more readily than the education community. Perhaps that stems from the school environment: educators decide what they want the class to know, then give it to everyone rather than select the information each one would find most relevant.

3. Recognize, respect and reach out to interest levels. It may be offensive to a school leader that some community members do not relate to school issues. Perhaps they don't understand a school's problems and don't even want to read an article, let alone donate time or money. Or perhaps their values and lifestyles just don't foster a strong relationship with the local schools.

Whatever the cause, it is the job of school leaders to present a clear connection with their cause and the citizen's best interests. It may be the value of his house if it's near the school, or upgrading of the community in general, or a future opportunity for her own child. Without a personal link of some sort, however, many citizens will not — and cannot be expected to — respond to communications about institutions to which they feel no relationship.

Since school leaders tend to believe wholeheartedly in the fundamental importance of schools — to which they have dedicated their life's work — their requests for support and understanding from all segments of their communities tend to take on a tone of entitlement, and their frustrations are often expressed in what can easily pass for judgmental criticism.

The answer is to bring citizens who feel no commitment to their schools into some kind of contact with them, to forge a link, to establish some bond upon which future communications can be based. Home visits to the elderly by students through community programs? Citizens in classes as volunteer tutors or guest speakers? Students interviewing citizens for the school paper? Advisory groups formed to guide districts, programs or individual schools?

No specific techniques will work with all community groups or issues, but the basic rules of developing human involvement with courtesy, respect and effective, appropriately used communication strategies are the ingredients of every successful community relations program.

School leaders who work by checklist and occasional project blueprints are destined for community relations disasters — unless their checklist is one of trusted community contacts and their blueprint is for an ongoing community relations program developed especially with their organization and their community in mind. ■

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'Those' Children Are Ours: Moving Toward Community

BY PATRICIA GÁNDARA

If families make the greatest difference in how children do in school, how can schools help students who might otherwise fail? Redefining schools as a community effort is the essential first step.

America is experiencing an unpublicized crisis in education. It is not the crisis of mediocrity of which we were warned in 1983, nor is it a failure to keep up academically with the Japanese or the Soviets. In reality, our brightest students are still competitive with any other country's brightest students. America's crisis results from our forgetting, in our headlong race for "excellence," that a significant portion of our children are not on the excellence bandwagon—not, in fact, on any bandwagon at all. The education reform movement has ignored them altogether.

Patricia Gándara, currently a professor of education at California State University at Sacramento, was until recently director of education research for the Assembly Office of the California Legislature and commissioner of postsecondary education for the State of California. Her research interests have included causes of success among minority students, bilingual education, and the year-round school.

Nearly a quarter of America's children are on an educational path leading nowhere. While test scores appear to be on the rise all over the country, a closer look at the figures reveals that the least successful students are actually losing ground: The gap between their skills and performance and those of their peers is growing wider. These are the children of the poor, who coincidentally are also often ethnic minorities.

The failure of the reform movement to make any positive difference for these children has raised some hard questions: Can schools make a difference for poor and minority children—or is their school performance too closely bound to home and neighborhood experiences? How do some poor, minority parents help their children overcome barriers to school success? What role can a community play in securing these students' educational future?

We know from decades of research that families are critically important to the academic success of all children. Studies have shown that, for most children, the schools they attend make less difference to eventual academic attainment than the families from which they come. Given this evidence, the conclusion would seem to be that schools cannot make the important difference for children's life chances, that this must be the work of parents. But parents are not equally equipped to complemen. the school curriculum within their own homes. What occurs in homes that provides an advantage to some children? What proves a disadvantage to others? And are these factors changeable, given our social and economic structure?

The first question to address is: Why are the effects of family so powerful? Part of the answer is that parents are a child's first educators. Half of children's mature intellect is formed at home before they even reach school. So are cultural patterns, notions of appropriate behavior, and basic values. And to the extent that these differ from the expectations of the school, the child will be at risk for school problems.

If a child, for instance, has learned behavioral patterns such as avoiding eye-contact with the teacher or being reluctant to answer questions in class, or if the child speaks a different language, the barriers between student and teacher will be high, and the educational prognosis will be dim. Research has demonstrated that even the most well-meaning teachers tend to have lower expectations of the ability of minority children, call upon them less in class, and reinforce their responses less than those of majority culture children. Hence, among the critical, and largely immutable, things that children bring with them from home are their ethnicity, their native languages, and their social status. But this only partly explains the effect of family on school performance.

Families also differ with respect to basic resources, both physical and psychological. Some homes reinforce the school curriculum daily, through the array of ideas and possibilities presented in the normal course of middle and upper-middle class family life. Access to things that enhance academic learning (computers, educational toys) also generally increases with income and education.

Even more important, however, are the psychological resources of middle-class and majority-culture parents, who tend to see the parent-school relationship in employer-employee terms. These parents *expect* the school to educate their children. If it fails, they will demand changes. Poor, minority parents more often *hope* the school will educate their children well, but if it fails, they are less likely to know what to do. Nor may these parents be in a position to evaluate the quality of education their children receive.

But the most important psychological resource of middle class parents is their conviction that they and their children rightfully belong in the social order—and that they have the authority to make changes. Poor parents and minority parents, perceiving themselves as marginal to the system, often feel that they lack such authority.

A school does not become part of a community by sending notes home, even carefully translated into the home language.

The Society's Owners

Certainly the greatest advantage an individual can have in any society is the power that accompanies a sense of belonging and a familiarity with the society's unwritten codes. Children from the middle class and from the majority culture are likely to grow up with a belief in their own power to affect their environment. They learn this from parents who "get things done" by knowing the right people, recognizing the right things to say, and understanding the system well enough to know how to make it work for them. These children act out powerful behaviors in school, where they are rewarded for demonstrating leadership skills, and where they will continue to fulfill society's prophecy for them.

A whole body of research has grown out of the study of "locus of control"—of whether people believe they're in control of their own lives. Middle-income students tend to believe their future is in their own hands. Lower-income students more often see their futures as out of their own control. Lower-income students, say researchers, translate this attitude toward life into counterproductive behaviors like not involving themselves in school or even dropping out.

"Externally locused" behaviors are often considered the product of a "culture" of poverty. They are, rather, responses to the reality of poverty and marginality. People on the margin of society rarely have the opportunity to shape their own lives, and they seldom witness such behaviors within their own environs.

I am reminded of the comments of a friend, a university professor, who suggested he could always tell the difference between the Mexican American students on campus and the university students from Mexico who were just visiting (and who, almost by definition, were middle-class). In terms of physical characteristics the two were indistinguishable, but a few minutes' observation made the differences apparent.

The students from Mexico strode across campus looking as if they belonged there. They didn't hesitate to claim space for themselves in the middle of the cafeteria, or anywhere else an activity was occurring. They had never perceived themselves as second-class citizens.

The Mexican American students, on the other hand, always seemed to huddle in a corner of the room. They didn't stride so much as stoop across campus—carefully staying out of the way of the other students, who "belonged" there. The belief that they are members of the club, invited guests at the banquet, may be the most powerful inheritance of the children of the middle class and the majority culture. Because this is not often possessed by poor and minority parents, they are unable to bequeath it to their children.

The Resources of the Poor

It would be inaccurate, however, to paint a picture of poor and minority families as empty shells, devoid of resources to aid their children. My own work, and that of other researchers, such as Emmy Werner at the University of California, Davis, offers powerful evidence of the importance of the family in the lives of poor and minority children. These families mediate the experience of the outside world. They make the children feel whole again when others suggest that they are different, and possibly inferior.

Within the family, even if not in the outside world, poor and minority children are able to communicate freely in a common language. Within the family, these children most often find the encouragement and support to go on and succeed even when society's expectations are low. Most of the poor, Mexican American students I studied who were successful in school attributed their desire to succeed less to schools or peers who introduced the notion of striving than to mothers who believed in them and encouraged them unwaveringly.

This faith came most often from some experience within the parents' own families of origin. Their parents, or grandparents, or other family members were perceived as powerful individuals. Always, there was the example of family members who had been able to exercise control over their own lives. Within such families is great untapped power. For other minority families, where even the memory of hope is dim, the solution may lie in links with such hopeful families as these.

Needed: Powerful Families

The urgency and importance of empowering parents becomes greater every day. This country's demographics are changing rapidly. A larger percentage of school-age children is coming from poor and minority homes than ever before. In California, a bellwether state for demographic change throughout the nation, 40 percent of the children in the public schools are now Black or brown. In the nation as a whole, one child out of four lives in poverty. For Black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican children, the figure is closer to one in two. All indications are that circumstances are worsening for the poor. Families at the bottom of the economic ladder hold a smaller share of the country's wealth than they did a decade ago.

Even among the middle class, more and more children face potentially handicapping circumstances. Sixty percent of the children starting school today will have lived in a single-parent home by the time they finish high school—if they finish high school. And some research suggests that the most important variable for the eventual academic and economic success of poor children may be the presence of two parents. Then, too, most mothers of school-age children work outside their homes, so even middle-class mothers find it more and more difficult to give their children's schooling the attention that they have traditionally provided, and upon which schools have depended. More and more children are getting lost between school and home.

The greatest advantage an individual can have in any society is the powerfulness that accompanies a sense of belonging.

How do we make it possible for "disadvantaged" families to produce advantaged students? We start by defining our children as an economic resource—not through the platitudes behind the creation of remedial programs for *those* children, but in a very personal way, acknowledging them as *our* children, our resource. We should choose to change the course of children's lives not because it is a generous thing to do, but because it is a smart thing to do: a good investment of our resources.

In California, school dropout rates hover around 50 percent in areas where Black and brown students are most heavily concentrated. And for Californians today, as for many other states in the coming decades, the future will depend on the economic productivity of these children—our children.

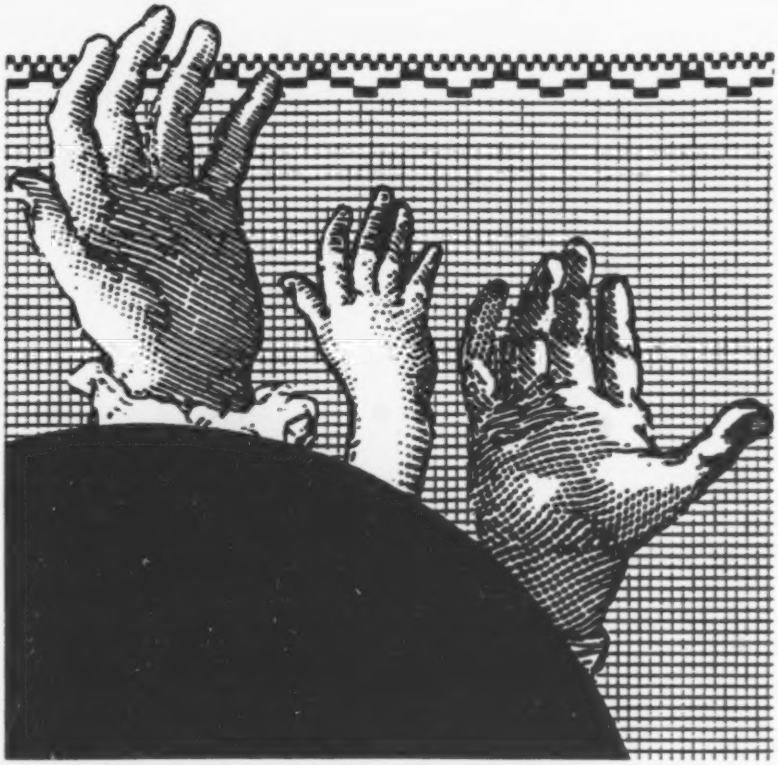
The reason for redefining *those children* as *our children* is not solely to make them more likely objects of our largess, but to help us redefine ourselves as a community of people whose futures are inextricably linked. We have heard much about the need to increase our level of productivity if we are to ensure our country's economic survival. And rightly so, as industry spends an ever-greater amount of time and money to train underskilled and undereducated workers. But less attention has been paid to the enormous social price that must be paid if large numbers of children are allowed to grow up unskilled and unprepared for participation in our social system. Do any of us wish to thrust our progeny into a world made hostile and divided by deprivation and disillusionment?

The Old School Community

It is unlikely that poor families alone will be able to change the educational and economic futures of their children, but a community of families *can* change the future of *our* children. Veterans of the school desegregation battles of the 1960s and 1970s will recall that the object of that social policy was not just to integrate classrooms and thus bring powerful parents together with less powerful parents to create change. School desegregation was an attempt to create a community of self-interest that would benefit all students.

Desegregation efforts have evidently succeeded in strengthening schools and school outcomes in some places. But already established communities have been a chief impediment to more widespread success. Parents and families understood the importance of connectedness. They saw the possibility that their children might lose the benefits of that community by reassignment to different schools, and they rejected that reassignment. Unfortunately, too, in many cases, little or no effort was made to forge a new sense of community in re-formed schools. This, we know, is possible. Private schools and parochial schools located great distances from where children live are frequently characterized by a strong sense of community and common vision. But communities, like other human relationships, require care and nurturing and sharing of both rights and responsibilities. A school does not become part of a community just by sending notes home to parents or inviting them to Open House, even if the notes are carefully translated into the home language.

The question we need to be asking is not, what can poor parents do to aid their children's schooling? but, what can schools and parents do together to create communities that will nurture all our children? Skeptics will immediately interpret this challenge as a suggestion that schools take the lead in solving social ills that are beyond their capabilities and resources. If solutions were limited to tacking on one more social program to the schools' mandate, the skeptics would probably be right. But there are other, better solutions.



The Case for Redefinition

The original purpose of schooling in this country was to transmit a common set of values and information that would allow citizens to participate productively in our social and economic system. Attendance was voluntary, and schools were viewed as supplemental to the instruction that occurred at home, in the community, and in the church.

No doubt because of our democratic traditions and fundamental belief in equal opportunity, public schooling caught on to an extraordinary degree. We began to worry about the social costs of excluding large portions of our youth. We established laws of compulsory attendance.

Required schooling was viewed as a way to avoid large-scale exploitation of an underclass and simultaneously inculcate values that would reduce the likelihood of antisocial behavior. (Of course it was also in some people's interests to keep young people out of the labor market and off the streets—but these, of course, were the most cynical of reasons for requiring schooling.) This attempt to educate so many students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs in a single setting has posed enormous challenges for our schools and given birth to controversies seemingly without resolution—over bilingual education, desegregation, equity in financing.

The increasing diversity in the school population, a growing self-consciousness about teaching "values," and a concurrent demand for "relevant" education to prepare youth for the job market have together resulted in the development of school curricula that are anything but equal. A curriculum rich in history, science, the humanities, and the arts, which could prepare students to live in a diverse and rapidly changing society, is conspicuously absent from many of our schools. Their curriculum offers students instead a core of skills and information designed to prepare them for only the most basic level of participation in society. Most important, the message of low expectations that such a curriculum carries probably does more damage to the psyche of these youth than their failure to acquire the subject matter.

Skills of Social Navigation

Ironically, our very diversity, the complexity of our lives and social systems, the explosion of knowledge and options, and the decline in importance of many social institutions that formerly complemented the work of the schools—churches, informal community groups, formal apprenticeships—require that our youth be prepared in more than just basic skills. They must be helped to navigate this complex social system, to understand its unwritten codes, and to make it respond to their needs.

Perhaps in part because we are a young country, composed of immigrants, we have become overly complacent about the process of acquiring the skills necessary to survive in a society like ours. We often think that these skills simply come with time. We are wont to call upon the experiences of our forebears as proof that poverty and marginality are only temporary stages in an inevitable process of becoming middle class. After all, children of the Great Depression went without meals, wore hand-me-down clothes, and eventually saw an end to that economic deprivation. Earlier, at the turn of the century, immigrants flooded into this country, undereducated and unable to speak the language. But few Americans had high school educations, and getting a job depended more on the strength of your back than on the language you spoke. Immigrants managed to enter the mainstream of our society relatively rapidly.

Today, however, the social costs of being poor and undereducated are high. Social and economic mobility are rewards for a superior education, skill, and social contacts. None of these things is readily available in the schools serving the poorest of our students.

The Schools We Need

How, then, shall we redefine schools to better match the needs of our students? We must start with the realization that students are first members of a family. They are daughters and sons, nieces and nephews, before they come to school and when they go home every afternoon. If students are not faring well within the family, they are not likely to fare well in school. If the family is troubled, it will not likely have the resources to support the children in their schoolwork. Every teacher recognizes and can readily identify the students who are not expected to do well in school because of "family situations." Yet we continue to respect a strict dividing line between schools and home.

If schools are to meet the real needs of children, they must meet the needs of the whole child. This may mean vaccinations, nutrition, or family counseling. It may mean a warm jacket for cold days, someone to supervise homework, or someone to care for the children after school. It may just mean someone for an overstressed single parent to talk to about managing a family alone. But it must mean linking parents together in such a way that the hopeful can help the hopeless, and those who expect the most from their schools and their children can encourage those same expectations for other children.

Of course, the school as currently structured cannot take on all of these tasks. But local government and community agencies can be coordinated at the school site. Local community resources can be inventoried, and many needs can be met by community members themselves.

What would such a community school look like? Perhaps it would resemble the one in East Los Angeles where the principal created a sewing room with borrowed and donated sewing machines. The school encouraged parents to come in and help make outfits for the band and curtains for the classrooms. The parents were also allowed to use the machines to make clothes for their children—clothes that would otherwise have been prohibitively expensive to purchase.

Parents made a major contribution to the school, so they felt involved. They also created a community within the school.

Parents—mostly non-English speaking—flocked in. They made a major contribution to the school, which made them feel valued. But they did more than that. They created a community within the school. The principal always had parents to call upon for help, and the parents developed a social network of their own upon which to rely. The children in the school apparently benefited from the close relationship between school and home, because their reading scores rose dramatically.

The community school might also resemble another Southern California school, where the parents aren't asked to sit through tedious advisory board meetings, but where they are asked to contribute the particular skills they have—carpentry, sewing, cooking—to fundraising efforts for the school. Here the biggest community event of the year is the parent-child appreciation luncheon, which everyone attends, dressed up. All of the children —not just the excelling students—and all the parents are made to feel special. Not surprisingly, by reaching out to all parents in a way that values their particular skills, this school enjoys an extremely high degree of parent participation. The children's level of achievement is notably higher than in surrounding schools.

A community school, by definition, reflects its surrounding neighborhood. Buildings are used year-round and throughout the evening. Community members meet regularly, perhaps over a dinner prepared by parents, to discuss school and other community issues. An office, a trailer, or a portable building is staffed with volunteers as well as local agency personnel. The local school is the first place people in the community turn for help.

Where there is a community school, teenagers who want to earn money or school credits know where to go to find work doing after-school homework supervision, tutoring, recreation supervision, or child care. Senior citizens in the neighborhood can walk to the school to volunteer time and share in the companionship of their community. Because the school meets the needs of all kinds of parents—working parents' needs for homework supervision and after-school care, lower-income parents' needs for health screening and social services—there's no longer a need to plead with parents to come to school. The community school is the place where family needs are met, where the community draws strength and identity.

If we were to turn schools into resource centers for communities, if the terms "school" and "community" began to merge in citizens' minds, then a parent might spend some part of the day in the back of the classroom, not only monitoring the progress of the students and the quality of the education, but also making an unspoken statement that education is crucial and that the people providing that education deserve the respect of the students and the community. Businesses might provide release time for parents—maybe even other community members—to spend a few hours a month in the schools. Their presence would convey a basic message: school is serious business, and communities are partners in that business. The schools might enjoy the support of all sectors of the community. No longer would they be the special interest of that one-quarter of the voting public with children in school.

A New American Community

A few years ago, a very important book appeared. *Habits of the Heart* warned us of the perils of what has often been perceived as our greatest strength as a nation: our unflagging faith in the spirit of individualism. American culture is filled with the legends of people who supposedly pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps and became successful with nothing more than a belief in themselves and the opportunity to pursue their destinies in a land that did not confine them to the limitations of their origins. In America, the son of a janitor can leave his home, leave his community, and become a successful businessman.

Maybe. Statistically, however, the son of a janitor is more likely to leave his home, leave his school, move to a neighborhood not unlike the one in which he grew up, but where he is unknown, and become a janitor. The authors of *Habits of the Heart* suggest that we may have traded the strength and support of our communities for an increasingly elusive personal benefit. We may have traded poverty of body for poverty of spirit. There is no more important place to begin to change that trend than in our schools, where our children learn what we value as a nation, more by what we don't do than by what we do. And there is no better place to create a community of caring than in our schools—the heart of our future.

For Further Reading

Broken Promises: How Americans Fail Their Children. W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson. Basic Books, 1982. This book challenges Americans to make the welfare of "other people's children" their own concern, suggesting that this may, indeed, be the only way of achieving social justice in our society.

Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life. Robert N. Bellah and others. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. The authors propose a rethinking of the American emphasis on individualism and, borrowing from de Tocqueville, warn of a nation becoming devoid of community.

Parents as Partners in Education. Eugenia H. Berger. Merrill, 1987. This handbook on developing parent-school partnerships devotes considerable attention to school-based and home-based programs to enhance the communication between families and schools.

"Passing Through the Eye of the Needle." Patricia Gándara. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, no. 2, 1982. This article describes a study of Mexican American youth who possessed background characteristics predictive of school failure, but who "beat the system." The focus is on the things that the young women in the study reported to be central to their success.

School Power. James P. Comer. Free Press, 1980. This story of how one community addressed inadequate school outcomes for its children makes the case for education's being a joint activity of families and schools.

Vulnerable but Invincible: A Longitudinal Study of Resilient Children and Youth. E. E. Werner and R. S. Smith. McGraw-Hill, 1982. This report on a group of children being reared on the margins of society looks at the antecedents, in both homes and communities, to successful outcomes for these youngsters.

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Beyond Parents: Family, Community, and School Involvement

Teachers and administrators are not adequately prepared to address the range of children's social and psychological needs. They know what ought to be done, but not how to do it. Fortunately, as the authors point out, there are others who can help.

By Patricia A. Edwards and Lauren S. Jones Young

A CHILD LIVES in many worlds. Home, family, school, neighborhood, and society shape the contours of childhood and adolescence. Action in one sphere ripples through the others. In the best of circumstances, these realms are complementary and reinforcing – guiding children's positive development into informed citizens and economically independent adults. The best of circumstances, however, elude large numbers of children, especially poor children of color who live in the inner city.

Recent hopes for successfully launching U.S. children into the 21st century have been pinned on reclaiming a part of our past – the involvement of parents as partners in the education of their children. The importance of parent involvement in children's schooling has been

Photo by David Grossman

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a persistent theme in the research and school reform efforts of the last three decades.[1] Studies point to higher student achievement when parents participate in school activities, monitor children's homework, and otherwise support the extension into the home of the work and values of the school.[2]

Family/school involvement is a two-way street. Children are more likely to make smooth transitions between home and school when they see aspects of themselves and their experiences reflected in the adults who teach them. Parent voices can strengthen the school program and mediate tensions between school and community; open exchanges hold the possibility of aligning the expectations of schools and families. Many of us who grew up in stable, close-knit neighborhoods knew that many eyes – including those of our teachers – watched us and would tell our mamas when we misbehaved.

In the past, neighbors, teachers, and parents spoke in a common voice. James Comer, a professor of child psychiatry at Yale University, likes to tell a childhood story about how his mother and his teacher would meet at the local A & P. They would talk about his progress and behavior in school, sharing and reinforcing family and school values. He comments: "When schools were an integral part of stable communities, teachers quite naturally reinforced parental and community values. At school, children easily formed bonds with adults and experienced a sense of continuity and stability, conditions that were highly conducive to learning."[3] For many children today, those kinds of communities and the ready support of nearby relatives and friends have vanished.

That parents no longer run into their children's teachers at the local grocery store says much about the changes that have taken place in poor urban neighborhoods and in growing numbers of poor rural communities. Teachers – black or white – rarely live in the same economically depressed neighborhoods as the children they teach. Many middle-income and working-class African-American families have also moved out, assisted in large part by eased racial restrictions in housing.[4] Gone too are many of the businesses and social institutions – the foundation and vitality of community life – that these families supported.

At the same time, transformations in the urban economy have limited the kinds of jobs available to high school graduates and dropouts. While it was once possible to find good-paying jobs in automobile, steel, and other kinds of heavy manufacturing, the kinds of jobs available in the inner city today pay wages that fail to keep pace with the costs of raising a family. In the inner cities, those with little economic security are concentrated in the same areas, living with the daily stresses that accompany economic hardship and desolate neighborhoods.

Once the norm, the married-couple household, with father employed and mother at home caring for the children, is a disappearing pattern. Economic concerns drive mothers to work long hours outside the home. The number of children affected by unwed parents, divorce, and separation continues to rise. From 1970 to 1989 the proportion of children living with one parent jumped from 12% to 24%, and many of them were living with mothers struggling to make ends meet.[5] At any given time, one-fourth of American children live with one parent, usually a divorced or never-married mother; among African-American and Latino children, that figure skyrockets to 55% and 30% respectively.[6]

Adults other than a child's parents are taking on significant child-rearing roles. While the extended family's involvement in child rearing is not new among African-Americans, for example, the scope of that involvement is growing. Parents who thought that their child-rearing days were over are increasingly raising their grandchildren. In the last 20 years, the percentage of black children being raised by a grandparent has risen from 3.2% to 12.5% (or one in eight).[7] Households with children under 18 years of age now commonly include foster parents, extended families, children living with other relatives, adoptive parents, or reconstituted and blended families.

One of every five children in the U.S. lives in a family whose income is below – often far below – the poverty level; that rate doubles among blacks and Latinos.[8] While poverty levels rise and fall, children remain the most impoverished age group, and obstacles to their well-being continue to mount. The realities of impoverishment should horrify a wealthy nation, but we shut our eyes to the social context of childhood in the inner city. Poverty brings a host of risk factors in addition to empty pockets. Lack of immunizations and health care, poor nutrition, inadequate housing, homelessness, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), substance abuse, and violence become regular features of poor children's lives. The crack-cocaine epidemic is touching every corner of low-income urban African-American communities, manifesting itself in babies exposed prenatally to drugs, mothers too strung-out to see to the needs of their children, and neighborhoods under siege. The problems are complex and interrelated, but together they undermine the strength and frustrate the efforts of poor families and their communities.

The resilience of families is impressive. Contrary to popular images – and irrespective of family structure – most families today are not in disarray and are not failing to meet their child-rearing responsibilities.[9] It is necessary to sort out the group called "parents," noting the range in their experiences, in their relationships with their children, and in their feelings about school. Some have a high regard for education; for others, their children's schooling is a relived struggle amid more pressing concerns. The goals and values of individual families will vary and may differ from those of the teacher and the school. It is this individuality that parents bring to parent involvement efforts. Yet too often parent involvement strategies are developed as if these important variations did not exist, and the results are disappointing. Until schools acknowledge the range in dispositions, backgrounds, experiences, and strengths among families, efforts to establish sound home/school communication and partnerships will continue to falter.

JUSTIFYING FAILURE

Students' home lives are both blamed for children's low achievement in school and seen as children's salvation.[10] In growing numbers of communities the significant adults and institutions in children's lives pull in opposite directions.

As the two major institutions that socialize children, families and schools share a long history – often one of tension and mistrust.[11] While most schoolpeople stress the importance of parents as their children's first and primary teachers, in reality large numbers of parents are excluded from routine exchanges with schools. Meetings scheduled during working hours, few communications to parents from school, few opportunities to observe in classes, and a variety of other factors make parents feel unwelcome and uncomfortable in their relations with schools.

Just as most schools have not yet figured out how to facilitate strong parent involvement, neither have they adjusted well to new family and community realities. Teachers are among the first to witness the human costs of society's wider failures, but, while cognizant of those changes in their classrooms, they and other educators have been slow to question the "one style fits all" pattern of home/school practices.[12] Family/school practices are steeped in assumptions about childhood, family, community, and school roles. When conceptions of what should be don't mesh with what is, educators often attribute that failure to parents' irresponsibility, lack of interest in their children, and lack of skills.[13] Tensions rise, and blame is volleyed back and forth between school and home. An example from a rural southern school illustrates this point.

Donaldsonville Elementary School had been recognized for its "good curriculum," even though teachers were disappointed with the progress of their students. Eighty percent of the student population were African-American children, and 20% were white children; most were members of low-income families. Teachers felt that they were doing all they could to help these children at school. Without parental assistance at home, the children at Donaldsonville were going to fail. The teachers' solution was to expect and demand that parents be involved in their children's education by reading to them at home.

To the teachers this was not an unreasonable request. There is good evidence of positive gains made by "disadvantaged" elementary students when parents and children work together at home on homework and learning packets.[14] What the teachers did not take into account was that 40% of the school's parents were illiterate or semiliterate. When the parents didn't seem willing to do as the teachers asked, teachers mistook parents' unfamiliarity with the task being asked of them, coupled with low literacy skills, for lack of interest in their children's education. The continued demand that parents read to their children at home, which had a particular meaning in teachers' minds, sparked hostility and racial tensions between teachers and parents. Each group blamed the other for the children's failures; each felt victimized by the interaction. Children were caught between their two most important teachers – their classroom teacher and their parent.

The principal and the teachers recognized that they had to mend the serious rift between them and the parents. The principal stated that she wanted to "unite the home, school, and community." Creating a process for parents to become integral and confident partners in their children's schooling was the first step. But how to begin? Should the process be expected to emerge from traditional – and failed – interactions between home and school? Five other cases will allow us to explore this matter further.

Case #1: The drug bust. A first-grade student was absent for 16 consecutive days. The student's concerned teacher did what most teachers would do: she attempted to contact the child's parent. She sent several letters home and telephoned the parent, but the number was no longer a working one. The teacher even called one of the parent's neighbors to inquire if the neighbor would inform the parent of the need to arrange a conference. None of these efforts to reach the parent proved successful.

Sharing her concerns with the principal, the teacher learned that the mother had previously been arrested for drug use and that a baby had been removed from her home during her last incident with the police. The principal's fear that the mother might have resumed her involvement with drugs was borne out when the mother was arrested a few days later. The children were placed in foster homes; the mother faces a 20-year prison sentence.

Case #2: My sister's children. A teacher's attempt to contact a third-grader's parent led to the discovery that the parent was missing. The child's 17-year-old aunt stated that she had not heard from her 22-year-old sister and did not know where she was.

Case #3: Caught in the middle. A mother who had custody of her 5-year-old son suspected that her former husband had been sexually abusing the boy. Consequently, the mother did not want the school to contact her former husband about their son's performance in school. The father, however, demanded that he be kept informed by receiving the same communications from the school that were sent to his former wife. He further charged that the mother was an alcoholic and that he was in a better situation to respond to the child's needs.

Case #4: The school as a battleground. The faculty in a large urban school felt that it was under siege. Drug paraphernalia littered the school grounds. Gang fights were common occurrences. Tensions between teachers and parents had reached the point that teachers felt their lives were in jeopardy.

Case #5: Bewildered in kindergarten. A kindergarten teacher with more than 20 years of experience was at a loss as to how to develop a workable instructional program for a young child who was acting, according to the teacher, "strange." The child's learning style did not fit any pattern that the teacher had observed in all her years of teaching. She arranged a conference with the parent to better understand how best to work with this child. During the course of that conversation, the parent revealed that her daughter had tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS. The mother added, "I want the best for my child, but I just don't know what is going to happen to her schoolwise." While the teacher did not verbalize her feelings at the time, she later confided to a colleague that she did not know the best way to develop the child's learning potential.

A DIFFERENT FRAMEWORK

Like the situation in Donaldsonville, each of these cases raises significant questions about the appropriate role of schoolpeople in the lives of children and their families and communities. How far into the home and neighborhood should the school's responsibility extend? What forms should home/school partnerships take? How are teachers to be helped with designing instructional programs for children with neurological disabilities stemming from viruses, addiction, and environmental pollutants?

Schools must do more than merely refer students to social services and health departments. They must become multiple-service brokers for children.

Schoolpeople are going to have to think differently about what they want for children and what they expect from families and communities. In Donaldsonville, the missing link was forged by a program created by a local university professor who never accepted the assumption of parents' lack of interest in their children's success. She solicited community support to attract parents to a reading program, where they would be assisted in learning how to read and how to read with their children. She called on community leaders to recruit parents they knew in contexts outside the school. Church leaders, black and white, agreed to preach from their pulpits about the importance of helping children learn to read. They regularly urged parents to attend the weekly reading sessions to learn to help their children in school, noting the importance of literacy as a tool of faith.

A local bar owner emerged as a strong supporter of the reading program, informing mothers who patronized his establishment that they would no longer be welcome unless they put as much time into learning how to read to their children as they spent enjoying themselves at his bar. He provided transportation to school and back home for participating mothers and secured funds from the city social services department for child care for parents who otherwise could not attend. A grandmother organized a campaign to telephone program participants each week. In sum, the bridge that connected home and school was found in the broader community.

In poor rural communities like Donaldsonville and in inner-city neighborhoods, the social context calls for rethinking the definitions and processes of home/school interactions. Boundaries separating the responsibilities of home, school, and community are blurring, calling into question traditional conceptions of parent involvement as a one-to-one relationship between parent and teacher. Despite the research on the benefits of parent involvement, traditional practices will continue to fall short for a wide band of children in poverty. John Blendinger and Linda Jones, among others, advise us to reach out to parents in new ways, to help parents connect to resources, to create environments where parents feel welcome, and to organize various avenues for participation.[15] Each of these steps is important, but they are insufficient for many poor communities. What these strategies typically lack is an ecological approach to strengthening all aspects of the child's development – a perspective underscored by Shirley Brice Heath and Milbrey McLaughlin, who question the adequacy of schools as social institutions, "because they are built on outmoded assumptions about family and community."[16]

Where should schools draw the line? Are schools the new place to accommodate the interwoven needs that children bring with them to the classroom? If we believe that schools have an obligation to assist students with aspects of their social and personal lives that interfere with their cognitive and social development, then we must rethink our structures, practices, and purposes.

Schools must do more than encourage parent involvement isolated from the broader social context; they must do more than merely refer students to social services and health departments. They must become multiple-service brokers for children.

Social, emotional, physical, and academic growth and development are inextricably linked. As the social supports for children weaken, teachers have to devote much more time and energy to noninstructional demands. Teachers' and administrators' primary responsibility is instruction, but, as a practical and moral matter, they cannot ignore the social and psychological dimensions of their students' lives. Changing social contexts demand changing practices. This view not only stretches the boundaries of parent/school involvement but redefines its purpose: not just higher academic achievement, but the well-being of children in its fullest sense.

Several efforts currently under way are redefining the relationships of school, family, and community. Schoolpeople are forging alliances with an array of community organizations and agencies.[17] They are extending notions of the "family," making room for single parents, working parents, foster parents, grandparents, and others having significant responsibility for children. They are challenging the separateness of systems designed to support children and their families. And they are devising strategies to meet a fuller range of children's needs, using family and community resources.

This work is a lot to ask of educators whose professional education did little to prepare them for it. Yet many individual teachers and administrators today are up to their elbows in such tasks, trying to respond to children's physical and social needs as they are pulled away from other responsibilities. Addressing the deepening needs of urban poor children today will tax all available resources both in and outside of schools. One thing is clear: teachers and schools cannot do it alone. An ecological approach and shared responsibility through multiple partnerships could free educators to better focus on learning needs. Donaldsonville is an example of how one school mobilized resources within families and the community to build positive learning experiences for children.

Schoolpeople will need to develop repertoires of styles and strategies that acknowledge the interrelationships of the social and the individual, they will need to reconceptualize the networks of community organizations and public services that might assist, and they will need to draw on those community resources. Developing an integrated, accessible system of support for children and their families requires adopting different philosophies of service provision and removing the boundaries separating services – a prospect made more difficult as agencies compete for scarce public dollars. Yet, until such partnerships are formed, schools will not be able to sponsor the kinds of home/school/community relationships considered so important to children's in-school growth and development.

Moving to broader notions of community alliances means moving beyond incremental tinkering or simply assessing deficiencies of parents, teachers, schools, and communities. The framework that we propose calls for a coordinated network of multiple resources that builds on family and community strengths. Experience shows that teachers and administrators desperately want to be successful, but, because they are not adequately prepared to address the range of children's social and psychological developmental needs, they are left frustrated. They know what needs to be done, but not how to do it.[18] There are others who can help.

This discussion leads us to offer five recommendations:

1. Home/school strategies should be founded on the strengths of families and their understandings of their children.
2. Efforts should be organized around preventive strategies. Thus school personnel must understand the children and families that they serve – including the wide range of social, personal, economic, and psychological stresses that families may be encountering. They will need to assess how this information will facilitate closer relationships with families to support children's in-school and out-of-school development.
3. Schools should explore multiple models for reaching out to families and to agencies involved with the families that they serve.
4. Drawing on community resources should become part of the school's daily routine, enabling speedy responses to children's immediate needs.
5. Prospective educators should encounter these issues in their professional preparation programs.

These proposals call for greater inclusion of adults who are important in children's lives and in vastly different ways from our traditional conception. Illustrating some of those different kinds of involvement – the convergence of school, family, and community in full support of children – has been the aim of this article. The time has come to reframe home/school relations diligently and seriously in light of the old African saying: "The whole village educates the child."

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Accommodating Change and Diversity: Linking Rural Schools to Communities

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A Report of the Ford Western Taskforce

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Rural Clearinghouse for Lifelong Education and Development
July 1990

Rural Schools and Community Development

Arguments that rural schools should become involved in local development have been made for more than a decade. Experiments have been underway since 1982, first in counties plagued by persistent poverty in the rural South and more recently in the Midwestern farm belt. Our research in states west of the Mississippi River identified a number of other efforts. This chapter reviews the arguments, both economic and educational, for involving schools in community development and explores some the ways rural schools are initiating this type of activity.

Rural Schools and Economic Development

Strategies for involving rural schools in local development make sense for a number of reasons. First, rural schools and their communities are undeniably linked. Community taxes support the school and the continued existence of the school is seen as vital to the survival of the community. Beyond this obvious linkage, economic and educational thinking offer additional arguments.

Economic Development

The notion that education is connected to economic development is hardly new. Schultz (1961) is credited with demonstrating the relationship between economic productivity and quality in the work force, as measured by level of educational attainment. The concept that human capital is a variable capable of influencing economic development has been eagerly embraced and is certainly fundamental to calls for restructured schools. For the most part, however, human capital remains useful as a global, not local concept.

A number of factors limit the extent to which rural community contributions to education serve as an investment in its economic future. Hobbs (1986) points out that being able to capitalize on your own investment in education often means being mobile. Communities gain a return on their investments only if youth remain in the community or in-migration balances out-migration. The extent of rural youth outmigration suggests that most rural communities have been subsidizing urban economic development rather than strengthening their own human resource base.

A second factor is the extent to which schools currently socialize young people to become good employees within a bureaucratic structure. McCune (1987) and others have acknowledged that the current school environment emphasizes fragmented tasks, conformity to an organizational structure, and dependence on the next layer of authority. These social orientations are at odds with the social and business environment of small towns. Rural communities are small enough places that economic development cannot proceed independently of community development. Community efforts to build an infrastructure, develop housing, or direct scarce resources to an economic venture are decided upon through intensely personal interactions that require skills in group processing and shared decision making. Moreover, economic development strategies in rural areas now emphasize business development as much as business recruitment. Entrepreneurial skills are far more valuable than the organizational skills currently implicit in the school environment.

While no one advocates closing the borders to insure that all a community's investment fuels the local economy, many do suggest that there are ways in which the concept of human capital can be made more local. Hobbs (1986) outlines features of knowledge-based rural development, including the notion that adult training be linked more closely to local economic development objectives. Sher (1977) proposes that the school's resources be used to incubate businesses which act as training environments for high school students before being launched as independent economic ventures. McREL (1989) suggests that schools which involve students in community projects enable students to give something back—information helpful to local development efforts, a renewed sense of pride, and in some cases themselves. Young people who thought there was no future in the community discover a place—staying to start a business or returning after post-secondary education.

Educational Outcomes

Arguments for involving rural schools in community development are made even more compelling by current calls for restructured schools. Many of the educational outcomes attributed to these early projects suggest that the activities offer useful alternatives to conventional models of schooling. The school-based business enterprises reported by Sher and the Research and Development course introduced at Belle Fourche High School (see case study in Chapter 3) have been successful in reaching some at-risk students, offering them a learning environment more compelling than the traditional classroom.

Teachers at Belle Fourche report that their students took more responsibility for their own learning, developed an understanding of how to function as a group, and engaged in critical thinking and problem-solving activities. Wiggington (1985) has long argued that learning which occurs within an experiential context builds a better bridge between the concrete and abstract. Belle Fourche points to the seriousness with which students approach learning when they realize the outcome is for real—an article published in the local newspaper, a business that needs to make a profit, or a report to be made to the local Chamber of Commerce.

These educational outcomes are not necessarily specific to the rural context. To be sure, many of the school activities or businesses respond to local needs. But reaching at-risk students, encouraging students to take more responsibility for their learning, involving students in higher order thinking and problem solving, or teaching effective group processing skills are outcomes embraced by nearly all schools, rural or urban. Moreover, the skills gained are valuable ones, useful in a wide range of adult contexts. Linkages which make sense to the local community also appear to make sense educationally.

Current Strategies

As mentioned earlier, recent interest in linking rural schools to community development can be traced to Sher's (1977) work in school-based economic development. Especially compelling in communities plagued by persistent poverty, linking education directly to a future business makes education worth the effort to young people who see no future for themselves. Nachtigal's work in the Midwest (McREL, 1989) introduced a broader strategy, suggesting that schools make the community a focus of study. Eight schools in South Dakota formed a pilot project. Similar efforts are now underway in other states served by McREL. Our research into states west of the Mississippi River identified a number of independent projects as well.

Efforts to organize these many programs into some sort of structure led us to propose three separate strategies:

- **Curriculum Development:** A school's response to community development involves incorporating some aspect of the community into the school's curriculum. In all other respects, the school is conventional.
- **School-Based Business Enterprise Development:** This approach involves curriculum development but has a specific outcome—the development of a school-based business or involvement of students directly in the world of work.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Student and/or school personnel are involved in a community development activity that may or may not take place with school support. Consequently, the linkages are often informal.

Each of these strategies is defined and illustrated in the sections that follow.

Curriculum Development

One strategy for involving the rural school in community development is to introduce curricular changes that accomplish this linkage as a part of the school day. One of the case study sites, Belle Fourche, used such a strategy by incorporating entrepreneurial skills into conventional courses and adding a new course entitled Research and Development. While schools normally initiate curricular changes, we found examples in which the community had been the initiator. In fact, who initiated the activity—school or community—serves as a useful structure within which to describe the programs.

Community-Initiated Change

Community-initiated change occurs when the community asks the school to respond to some need or create a new program. Typically, businesses or community leaders approach the school to ask for its involvement. The outcomes of such a request vary, but we found examples of schools helping maintain local businesses, training workers for local jobs, and/or initiating a community service.

A school district and community have joined together to maintain the local newspaper in Pacific Grove, California, a town of 15,000 along the Pacific coast. Pacific Grove's journalism class now works with the community newspaper, enabling students to gain experience with a local business and providing the newspaper with additional help. Students are writing on computers, editing their work, selecting photographs, and doing preliminary layouts. Newspaper staff members share their expertise during classes conducted at the school as well as on site at the newspaper offices. The newspaper absorbs all production costs.

Both the school and the newspaper report advantages: increased newspaper audience, increased enrollments in the journalism course, and resolution of financial problems for both the newspaper and the school (in maintaining the journalism program). In addition, the newspaper staff find that they have much to learn from as well as share with the students. Communication between the school and community businesses has improved as well. The publishing company has been pleased with the arrangement and is now offering a similar opportunity to students in Carmel, California. The Pacific Grove High School partnership has expanded to include six other schools in the Pacific Grove Unified School District.

School districts in Tonganoxie, Kansas and Carrizozo, New Mexico have developed training programs for local workers. Tonganoxie has a metal building manufacturing company that offered to help the high school expand its metals and welding shop. Materials were provided through the manufacturing company at low cost. In exchange, the school trains employees for the manufacturing company. Meanwhile, the school has also been able to expand the curriculum offerings at the high school. Likewise, Carrizozo, New Mexico has developed a meat cutting laboratory that complements the larger facilities at a local meat packing plant. Local patrons bring animals to the miniature processing plant for butchering. Students gain experience in slaughtering and processing the meat for home use. Both the school and local meat packing business are benefiting from this joint effort. Students interested in staying in the community are able to train for local jobs.

School districts can also initiate community services through their curriculum offerings. Annapolis, Missouri, is a town of about 375 located deep in the Ozark Hills. The town has no newspaper, so the mayor asked the school if it could help in distributing a community newsletter. Through the Business program, the Future Business Leaders of America Club took on the responsibility of typing and distributing a newsletter to the entire community every two weeks. Students have developed a new awareness of the activities of their community. The community profits from the increased communication. Ties between school and community have been strengthened and a new communication network created.

School-Initiated Change

Schools also initiate curricular changes, typically through the efforts of individual teachers but sometimes through school-wide efforts, such as that described in the case study of Belle Fourche. For the most part, these strategies select some aspect of the community as a research focus, enabling students to gain experience in research methods as they collect information helpful to the local community.

A teacher in the Linn, Kansas school district decided to involve the accounting class in the research needed to develop a business plan. The class surveyed local businesses to determine what businesses existed, what businesses were duplicated, and what new businesses were needed or could be supported in a town the size of Linn (about 500 residents). Based on information from the survey, students then selected a hypothetical business to start. Procedures for starting a business with a bank loan were contrasted with those that were required to sell shares. Mock loan papers and corporation papers were completed. Oral reports and a field trip to the local bank concluded the activity. Students learned a great deal about what is involved in starting a business as well as about their own community. Local business owners and bankers were delighted to be asked for information and advice.

Cabool, Missouri is a town of 2100 in southern Missouri. The school conducted a survey to develop a resource book that identifies community members willing to share their skills with students. This resource book allows local experts, generally with business backgrounds, to be paired with students who want to gain more information about the expert's field. This pairing has been important in allowing students and local business people to share ideas, experiences, and perceptions of their community. In addition, teachers can easily link local resources with curricular needs, involving community residents in a wide range of activities.

The Moab, Utah School District has taken a different approach. The school has an Outdoor Education Project, which organizes the science curriculum around the natural surroundings of the area. In response to the growing tourism industry, Moab's new science curriculum will be supplemented by two courses, Introduction to Career Marketing and Hospitality Services. A third course on Entrepreneurship will be introduced next year. Located near Arches National Park and

Canyonlands National Park, Moab feels that its science curriculum can easily be linked to activities which support local economic development and is working hard to help students gain the skills needed to start their own businesses.

Entrepreneurial courses are being introduced in a number of rural schools, including Presho, South Dakota; Linn, Kansas; Moab, Utah; and Winchester, Kansas. Hard hit by the decline in natural resource-based economies, many of these communities were encouraged to develop home-based businesses as one strategy for helping families survive. Gradually, many rural communities have realized that it is also a strategy for community survival. New business development will probably become a more significant economic development activity than business recruitment.

School-Based Business Enterprises

Some schools have moved beyond curricular adaptations and involved students directly in the world of work. These projects range from work study credit for students employed by local businesses to the creation of independent, non-profit businesses within the school.

The high school in Stanton, North Dakota offers credit for experience in the real world of work. A community of 700 in central North Dakota, Stanton created a school–business link that offers students a wage and work experience. The program is coordinated by a classroom teacher. Students must have senior standing with grades that indicate they will successfully complete their high school education.

Another school district, Glenns Ferry, Idaho, is providing work study experience for students with a definite philosophy in mind. This community has decided that the best way to enhance economic development is to accentuate positive features of their community rather than chasing smokestacks. Blessed with recreational activities, natural environmental beauty, a quaint small town atmosphere, and easy access to an interstate highway, this town of about 1400 in southern Idaho has much to build on. Placing students in the work force and giving them hands on experience with local businesses allows students to explore local options before graduation. The work study program has found widespread support in the community.

The Las Animas, Colorado School District turned the school yearbook into a non-profit business. Deeply in debt and of poor quality, the yearbook was dropped from the school curriculum by the principal. The community was outraged and called a meeting to solicit support from students and community members to reinstate the yearbook. Approximately 140 students and 70 community people volunteered to do whatever was needed to save the yearbook. In anticipation that the school–community group would eventually assume responsibility for the yearbook, the business teacher developed a class to train students in entrepreneurial skills. In the meantime, the principal discovered that the course qualified as a vocational offering, generating state funds sufficient to cover about one-third of the annual yearbook costs. The yearbook is now operated by the students as a non-profit business. It has developed into a community yearbook, serving as a publicity piece for the community as well as the school. The yearbook includes pictures and editorials that reflect the positive community attitude that turned the project around.

Raising money for school events and activities usually finds students selling candy or magazines to the community. In the Dietrich, Idaho School District, the business teacher sensed that the community was growing tired of door-to-door sales. The teacher decided that students should start their own business. Now, Dietrich High School grows plants in the school's greenhouse. The plant sales generate money that was once raised in traditional door-to-door format. Following the success of the greenhouse, the students have begun to raise mealworms to sell to fish bait companies. The school is presently exploring other entrepreneurial opportunities. Students raise the needed money and learn valuable skills in the bargain.

Sometimes communities simply fall into entrepreneurial activities. Columbia School District in Hunters, Washington is just such a community. A phone call from the state game department asked whether the school could find something to do with baby pheasants. The school said yes, agreeing that the Future Farmers of America (FFA) would raise the baby pheasants until they were old enough to be released into the immediate area. The purpose of the activity was to make the community attractive to hunters from metropolitan areas. Later the FFA entered the commercial fish business, raising and releasing rainbow trout in area streams. These two activities have exceeded everyone's expectations. The agricultural classes in Hunter have now become directly involved in wildlife management. The FFA received the Building Our Community state award and was also nominated this past year. The increase in tourism has created jobs and has been a boom to the local economy. One gas station in town has grown to three and a new mobile home/recreational vehicle park has been built.

These entrepreneurial activities have also improved community pride. Located in an economically depressed area and populated by substantial numbers of Spokane Indians, Hunters had long felt the despair of poverty. The recent success has completely altered the community's sense of future. Although no formal evaluation has been done, local leaders claim that more students are going on to college with a larger percent of them receiving scholarships. Several students are attending college to work in wildlife management. The principal believes that athletics has also been affected. A school with traditionally poor teams has won three state championships in the last three years. The defeated dying town attitude has changed to "we can and will survive."

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are characterized by school personnel or student involvement in community activities, with or without the school's support. Many times these contacts are informal, as in the case of Annapolis, Missouri. Annapolis maintains a Community Betterment Program which encourages people to informally get involved in community activities. School personnel and students have both been represented on this board. Teachers, administrators, and school board members in numerous rural school districts are also involved in chambers of commerce, health boards, governing bodies, or community agencies that help build strong communities.

Extracurricular activities can also include school personnel or student involvement in a program or project that contributes directly to community development. The school's artist-in-residence program provided such an opportunity for Okemah, Oklahoma Middle School. Middle School students presented a live concert with the artist-in-residence to raise money for a local scholarship fund. These students went on to make and sell their own recordings. Proceeds from the sales were used for community enrichment projects.

The Brewster, Kansas School District formed a unique partnership with the community that is presently idle but will hopefully continue. In an attempt to lure a 20-district special education cooperative board to their town, citizens formed a school–community partnership. Brewster developed a public relations brochure and packaged a proposal to house the special education cooperative. Brewster lost the bid but the superintendent, who spearheaded this drive, would like to use this approach to perhaps attract business enterprises. Although the school–community partnership is presently inactive, the superintendent hopes that after the group recovers from the rejection, it will see the benefits that this effort has had on the community.

While it is true that some school personnel will participate in community activities as a matter of choice, schools need to be sensitive to the need to send clear signals supporting community involvement. We found schools using a number of strategies: providing release time for school personnel and students, offering financial support to community groups, or extending community access to school facilities.

Several school districts allow release time for school personnel and students to serve on committees that are working on community projects. Prairie High School in Cottonwood, Idaho allows a student to sit on the Cottonwood Community Development Committee with full voting privileges. In addition to allowing this student release time, the school also encourages the student representative to take two to four friends to the meeting as observers. Jefferson Community School District in Iowa has encouraged and recognized faculty involvement in community affairs.

Schools also support extracurricular activities by financial remuneration in one form or another. Dietrich, Idaho purchased two extra computers, one of which was placed in the only downtown store. Linked to the school computer's hard disk, this computer offers local citizens access to electronic mail/bulletin board services. Uses range from simple electronic mail to farm equipment advertisements. School personnel in Hugo, Colorado have had their dues to local business and professional associations paid by the school district. This has created an excellent school/business relationship and has consequently allowed at-risk students to be placed in some local jobs that might not have been available without this school/community link. The Upsala, Minnesota School District donated land to the city for a community recreation facility. The result has been an indoor recreation facility that supports the community and surrounding area, a collaborative effort that benefitted both the school and community.

Schools also show their support by allowing organizations to use their facilities. Faced with declining attendance at Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings, Monterey, Louisiana has incorporated children's activities and performances into their meetings. They have also provided community speakers at their PTO meetings, two efforts to increase interest and attendance. Crownpoint, New Mexico High School has developed the Troubleshooter Leadership Club, designed to involve students in various service activities. The students worked with the local planning board in naming the streets of the town. The Club has also dealt with issues related to drug abuse, the town's physical plant, and working with special education students. This Club has been instrumental in identifying and working on issues not addressed by other local groups.

The Cusick, Washington School District played a key role in attracting a new 300 million dollar lumber mill operation. The school offered space for negotiations between the community and industry and will similarly make space available for job interviews as well as training seminars for the new employees. The school has made it clear that it will work with the lumber mill anyway it possibly can.

One final strategy for linking schools with local development efforts is to involve school board members, school personnel, and students directly in community planning. Since many of these planning committees are in formative stages, we know little about their impact, influence, or success.

One community, Tonganoxie, Kansas, established a planning community eight years ago, offering us some insight into the benefits. Emphasis in Tonganoxie has been placed on teams. The church, bank, school, and post office are all considered important components to involve in community planning. The Tonganoxie planning committee surveyed the residents, discovering that 95 percent of the citizens would prefer to work in Tonganoxie rather than commute to a nearby town for employment. Backed by the Chamber of Commerce, the town has taken this survey seriously. In the last eight years, Tonganoxie has added an office partition company, a trailer manufacturing company, a veterinary supply company, a metal building manufacturing company, and most recently a bowling alley. As mentioned earlier, involvement in this planning effort has enabled the school to respond to specific training needs, such as those identified by the metal building manufacturing company.

Another impetus to community planning activities has been mandated community advisory committees in some states and efforts to regionalize in others. In response to Iowa's mandate, Lytton Community Schools established a Community Advisory Committee consisting of educators, community leaders, and others. The committee's purpose is to assist the school board in goal setting. Reeder, North Dakota schools participate in a regional planning process. Six counties, four in North Dakota and two in South Dakota, are currently looking at the extent to which local machine shops could be converted to high tech operations, thereby creating 50 new jobs. Linkages between schools and these planning efforts enable the region's educational resources to be made available to local development efforts.

Clearly, rural schools have found a variety of strategies by which to become involved in local development efforts. Whether it be through the curriculum, through school-based business enterprises, or through extracurricular activities for either the staff or the students, these strategies insure that the community's educational efforts can better match community needs. In the bargain, students gain valuable educational experiences!

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On Improving Achievement of Minority Children: A Conversation with James Comer

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The Yale Child Study Center in collaboration with the New Haven School System initiated a school improvement plan that addressed the negative impact of change, social stratification, and conflict and distrust between home and school. The results, documented in James P. Comer's book, *School Power* have been dramatically improved student attendance and achievement, and a new bonding between parents, teachers, and students. Comer is Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry, director of the School Development Program, and Associate Dean for Student Affairs at the Yale Medical School.

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You've been remarkably successful in improving schools for low-income, predominantly minority children. How did you do it?

Our program intervenes at the school level rather than the classroom or student level. The idea is to try to change the social system by applying the principles of behavioral and social science.

How do you do that?

A key element is to create a governance and management group that is led by the principal and includes several parents selected by parents; two or three teachers selected by teachers; and a mental health or support team person: a psychologist, social worker, or special education teacher.

This representative group addresses three things we consider critical to changing schools: climate, the academic program, and staff development. They bring together the available data and make a plan for the entire school year. Then they mobilize the resources, carry out their plan, evaluate the outcomes, and so on.

Are there other elements?

Yes, one is the mental health team, which brings together the psychologist, the social worker, and the special education teacher in the building. They sometimes work in the traditional way, focusing on a particular child, trying to provide service to that child's family, and so on, but they also work as a preventive group by trying to make sure that everything the governance and management team does is consistent with current knowledge of child development.

> **"[The] program made the teaching of basic skills very relevant to the children; it created a very exciting school, and the achievement scores just leaped upward."**

What's an example?

We had a child who had been in a classroom for eight months without ever smiling at the teacher. She was suspicious and hostile because she had had bad experiences with adults and felt she couldn't trust them. When the child smiled for the first time, the teacher was just devastated because she realized that in two more months, the child would go on to another classroom and would have to start all over with another adult.

We had a discussion, thought about discontinuity in the lives of many low-income children, and about the number of children who had problems establishing relationships with mature adults on an ongoing basis. Together we came up with the idea of keeping children with the same teacher for two years. We tried it and we had dramatic improvement in the performance of many of the children. There were some who had made no academic gains the first year but who made two years of academic gains the second year.

You've mentioned the governance group and the mental health team. Is there another element to the project?

Yes, parents participate on three levels. We have one parent per classroom, working on a parttime basis. They are paid minimum wage for ten hours of work a week, but each parent gives many more hours of volunteer time. That group of parents forms the core of a parent group because, when they invite two or three other parents to come in, you have 30–40 parents to make up the parent group in the school. That group plans, with teachers, all the assemblies and co-curricular activities. When we began using this approach, we got a great turnout from parents because the parents themselves were involved in putting the activities together, and they wanted to make them successful.

At the second level of participation, the parents in this parent group select a few of their members to serve on the governance and management group. That's a higher level of responsibility, so they're careful to select people who can work well with teachers and who have leadership skills. The third level of participation is the general turnout to the activities put on by the parent-teacher group. We went from having 15–20 people show up for activities to having 250 turn out. That increase occurred because the parents felt they had real responsibility and were really making a difference in the school.

And the effects carried over to the students' achievement?

There were a number of important effects: Having the children's own parents, or people like their parents, in the school made a big difference to the academic program. Children would hurry out of their classrooms after classes to show their papers to their parents who were in the school, and they didn't act in troublesome kinds of ways because they wanted to maintain the respect of the parents—as well as of the teachers, because parents and teachers were in agreement; they were working together. There was no way for children, as children will if they can, to play one adult authority figure against another. So we had great improvement—in academic achievement, in social behavior, and in attendance. Martin Luther King, the school we started with, has had the best attendance record in the city—ahead of all the higher socioeconomic schools—for four out of the last five years.

How do you explain that?

When you address the social climate and improve the quality of relationships among parents, teachers, administrators, and students, that reduces distrust and frees the energy that had gone into fighting each other, so that people have more time to concentrate on the academic program, to plan, and simply to manage the school better.

You described this as the intentional application of social science in education. Please say a little more about that.

One aspect of it is conceptualizing the problems of modern schools as contrasted with those of the schools of yesterday, and considering how to modify today's schools so as to support the development of children.

In the pre-1940s, the school was a natural part of the community. If after school you went to the grocery store with your parents, you would bump into your principal or your minister or your teachers. As they exchanged pleasantries and commented on how you were doing in school, you understood that these were people who knew your parents. They and your parents spoke with a common tongue about what was right or wrong, good or bad, and what they expected of you.

Since World War II, we've had high mobility. With mass communication, especially TV, children see and hear events from around the world all the time. Every half hour you can listen to the news and hear differences of opinion. Teachers live far from school, so there's both social and physical distance between them and the children they serve.

Often struggles that develop in society—between blacks and whites, or between people in middle and low income groups—create potential difficulties between home and school. Very often parents don't back up school people in the same way they did when the school was a natural part of the community. But schools continue to operate in the hierarchical authoritarian way they did in the past, ignoring the distrust and alienation between home and school. Children will act up in that kind of environment because there's confusion, and there are fewer authority figures influencing their behavior just when they need more of them. That's what I mean by understanding how social conditions affect behavior.

So understanding these conditions, we created the governance and management group I mentioned earlier, which brought parents, administrators, and teachers together in order to recreate a consensus about what was right and wrong, good and bad, and what everyone wanted the school to accomplish.

And both these things—understanding the social situation and designing a suitable response—are what you mean by the application of social science. Does your experience suggest that other schools may need to rethink these matters?

I think that many social systems serving children—recreational, even religious, institutions—must reexamine what they're trying to accomplish in the light of what we know about how children learn. School, for example, is not only about academic achievement; we are preparing young people so they can hold jobs, live in families, serve as heads of households, find satisfaction and meaning in life, and be responsible citizens. You don't get all of that by simply focusing on academic content.

> **"We asked the parents, 'What do you want for your children as adults?' . . . They came up with ideas. . . . So we worked out programs that integrated the teaching of academic skills, appreciation of the arts, and specific social skills."**

But across the country there is almost exclusive emphasis these days on academics.

And I'm greatly concerned about that, because most of the so-called reformers don't understand how people learn. They think of learning as a mechanical process; they don't seem to understand how much it depends on imitation, on identification with authority figures, on internalization of attitudes and values through relating emotionally to others. They do not give enough attention to the kind of climate that must be created to make that possible.

And the time and care it takes to build it.

Absolutely. When we went into King and Baldwin schools, they were 32nd and 33rd out of 33 in achievement. They had the most chaotic school climates you can imagine, with fighting, poor attendance, disrespect for authority, high turnover of staff—all the conditions you often find in such places—and all of that had to be turned around gradually.

What was your role in doing that?

Well, to help people understand the social system and to work out ways to change it.

Specifically how did you go about doing that?

The first year I spent a great deal of time in the building myself, dealing with immediate, hands-on problems along with the staff. I learned about the school, but it was important that I not be there so much, because that was a model that couldn't be replicated. So in the second year, our social worker became the person on the spot, and I became the conceptualizer, working with the social worker, the teachers, and the principal to plan the kinds of things that needed to be done. I was also the liaison to downtown. I put on a number of workshops in the behavioral sciences and child development, and I helped with the mental health team in particular, taking referrals on children with problems.

In responding to those referrals, we were able to convey a way of thinking about children and their problems: rather than thinking of them as bad children or children who weren't so smart, it was more helpful to think of them as underdeveloped, or as having developed ways of managing themselves that were troublesome to the system. We took the attitude that because they were underdeveloped, they could be given skills that would enable them to be successful.

We started out with individual teachers presenting children with problems and our mental health team responding to them. Teachers found it so helpful they began dropping in on the meetings even when they hadn't referred any of the children being discussed. After awhile we said, "Why not make this a workshop or a seminar?" They agreed, so they all started coming. We would go over what had happened, what the behavior meant, and what the teacher might do to address it. Other teachers would share their ideas about how they had handled similar problems.

How did you become involved in this project in the first place?

We were asked by the Ford Foundation. Our Center had been doing consultation in the schools on a parttime basis. The Ford people suggested that it might be more useful if we were there fulltime and if we had equal responsibility with the school for the outcomes of our suggestions.

Initially, our Center had been brought in by a progressive superintendent, but it was a very chaotic time—1968, when there was a lot of social unrest—so the superintendent left after the first year. The new superintendent was interested but caught up in his own problems and couldn't work with us. The third superintendent had much the same problems but was less supportive of our ideas and ways of working; he was a very dedicated man, but he wanted to make it happen right away. So we didn't get very much support during those first five years. We were able to bring about a change in the climate of the school, but we couldn't show academic gains. We hung on for a couple of more years and then started to leave, but the parents objected, so we decided to stay.

Then we got support for a program called "Social Skills Curriculum for Inner-City Children," because it was clear to us that helping the children develop good social skills reduced stress in the schools and made it possible for teachers and others to plan. So we decided to continue the effort to teach social skills in an even more systematic way.

We asked the parents, "What do you want for your children as adults?" Then we asked, "What do you think are the kinds of skills your children will need?" They came up with ideas in several categories: politics and government, business and economics, health and nutrition, spiritual and leisure time. So we worked out programs that integrated the teaching of academic skills, appreciation of the arts, and specific social skills.

Well, that program made the teaching of basic skills very relevant to the children. It created a very exciting school, and the achievement scores just leaped upward.

Some educators say it's a mistake to bring parents—especially low-income parents—in on school governance; that instead we should concentrate on getting parents to play a more direct role in the day-to-day learning of their own children—and that's enough.

It's not a mistake if you prepare the parents, if you genuinely respect them and assist them to participate constructively, and if you tap their strengths rather than their weaknesses. If we had taken low-income parents and tried to use them in the academic support area, they would have felt inadequate, defensive, and rebellious, and that would have created problems. But because we used them in the social support area, they felt they were doing something that was worthwhile and useful.

> **"...Most of the so-called reformers . . . think of learning as a mechanical process; they don't seem to understand how much it depends on imitation, on identification with authority figures, on internalization of attitudes and values through relating emotionally to others."**

And many of them gained confidence from being in the school; in fact, at least seven of the parents we know of went back and finished high school, went on to college, and became professional people themselves. One got a master's degree; her daughter, who just finished at Yale University last year, is now in medical school.

You said the curriculum emphasized instruction in social skills. What is that like?

Well, for example, at the time we initiated a unit on politics and government, there was a mayoralty contest going on in the city. The children wrote letters asking the candidates to make presentations to them and their parents. The children were taught how to be hosts for the candidates and their parents, and how to raise questions with the candidates so as to put them on the spot without being disrespectful. After the presentations the children wrote thank you letters as part of their language arts. Parents and teachers rented a bus and took the children around town to show them conditions. They discussed relationships between those conditions and politics and government, and the children came back and wrote about it for their language arts and social science lessons. To develop appreciation for the arts, the children put on a dance and drama program for their parents and the candidates.

That's a very broad interpretation of social skills. I thought it might just mean saying "please" and "thank you."

Well, it's that also, but these were more ambitious and more important social skills.

What about other aspects of the academic program?

After the climate of the school changed dramatically, there was more time and energy to identify problems and needs, and to plan. We changed the testing program so we could get the test scores back in time to identify weak areas and then have staff development for teachers to help them develop the skills necessary to improve in those areas. Teachers would identify weaknesses of the children and areas where they themselves needed more work, and we would base our staff development on our building-level goals rather than on ideas from downtown.

Your experience is certainly consistent with the principle that the individual school should be the base for school improvement activities.

Right. It's very difficult to transfer practices from one school to another because people are different, circumstances are different. Also the sense of empowerment that comes from looking at the problems of your own school and making adjustments for yourself is very important to bringing about change and improvement.

How do these ideas relate to the effective schools work of Ronald Edmonds and others?

Well, Ron and I were good friends, but we had a continuing debate. Ron believed that our approach—a comprehensive strategy that paid attention to relationship issues—was really the most desirable, but unfortunately he died before he could say so publicly. His concern about our approach was that if you told school people they had to know something about relationships and so on in order to improve schools, that would let them off the hook. They would say, "We aren't trained in that, and we can't do anything." What he did was to find schools that were readily identifiable as successful and then say to people, "This shows it can be done; you must find a way to do it."

The questionable aspect of that, as he himself was the first to admit, was that his five factors were not necessarily the cause of the success.

That's right. And what most people forget is that Ron used to say regularly that he personally never had changed a single school.

You would agree, though, that he did a great service by attracting national attention.

A tremendous service, because what he did—and this is what he insisted was necessary—was to disprove some of the dangerous notions about the inability of poor children and minority children to learn. When he first started his work, right after issuance of the Coleman Report, a lot of people were ready to write off poor kids. I think he found enough cases to clearly prove that under the right conditions, minority and poor children could succeed.

Do you see any dangers in the possible misuse of the effective schools literature?

Yes, I do—and he was concerned about that. But I think more people are beginning to understand that what he was talking about were end products, and there's a process you must go through to reach them; you can't create them instantly out of nothing. You can't demand that people have high expectations; you've got to develop a climate that allows people to have high expectations. The same teachers in our schools who, working in chaotic conditions, had low expectations for children developed high expectations when they were working in a desirable and supportive climate—and even if you start with high expectations, you can't sustain them in chaos.

> **"If we had taken low-income parents and tried to use them in the academic support area, they would have felt inadequate, defensive, and rebellious, and that would have created problems. But because we used them in the social support area, they felt they were doing something that was worthwhile and useful."**

What's the current status of your project in New Haven?

It's now been mandated in 12 of the lowest achieving elementary schools, and we're working with the central administration to help those schools use our model.

Are you wary of having it mandated?

No, because the new superintendent did a lot of groundwork, so the key school people, as well as parents, approve the idea of creating a desirable climate in order to attain academic achievement. I think mandating only shows that the central office really supports the program.

Based on your record of successful collaboration between the Yale Child Study Center and public schools, what advice do you have for our readers?

Most of all, collaboration takes respect for other people. You know, one of the reasons universities and public schools often have trouble working together is that university people are assumed to have higher status than public school people. School people are on the front line, carrying out what is probably the most important task in our society, but they're not given the recognition. It's very important for university people to understand that these are good people doing very tough jobs.

That's why I'm so troubled by some of the studies that focus on the IQ scores of educators. That's nonsense; it's irrelevant. There's a threshold level above which people have what it takes to do the job, and there's no need to worry about exact IQ scores.

So respect is essential, plus finding the talent that's there, establishing a goal, and then working together to achieve that goal. And, of course, that involves confronting issues, not running away or hiding from them—and confronting each other in a cooperative, problem-solving way, rather than a destructive way.

A final word?

I might just add that achievement of low-income and minority children is tremendously important. A lot of people seem to think it's going to be possible to close low-income people out of the mainstream, as we did in the past; that they'll have low-level jobs, and so on. It's just not going to happen. There was a time when you could have stability in society even though many people weren't well educated, because they could go take low-level jobs in the steel mills, or a variety of other blue-collar positions, and support a family, feel good about themselves, and be good citizens as a result. Today, in order to get even the low-level service job, you need good social skills. You need to be able to interact appropriately with people in a variety of settings.

You also need to do that to be able to achieve in school, so schools are going to have to modify the way they work to make it possible for low-income kids to be successful in school. If not, the rest of us are going to be victimized by people who are frustrated, disappointed, and angry: people who have seen others on television who are actually no brighter than they are but who have had different experiences. And they're simply not going to tolerate it.

That's why I say there's probably no more important mission in our society today than educating low-income and minority children.☐

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SECTION IV

Policy Decisions Regarding Community

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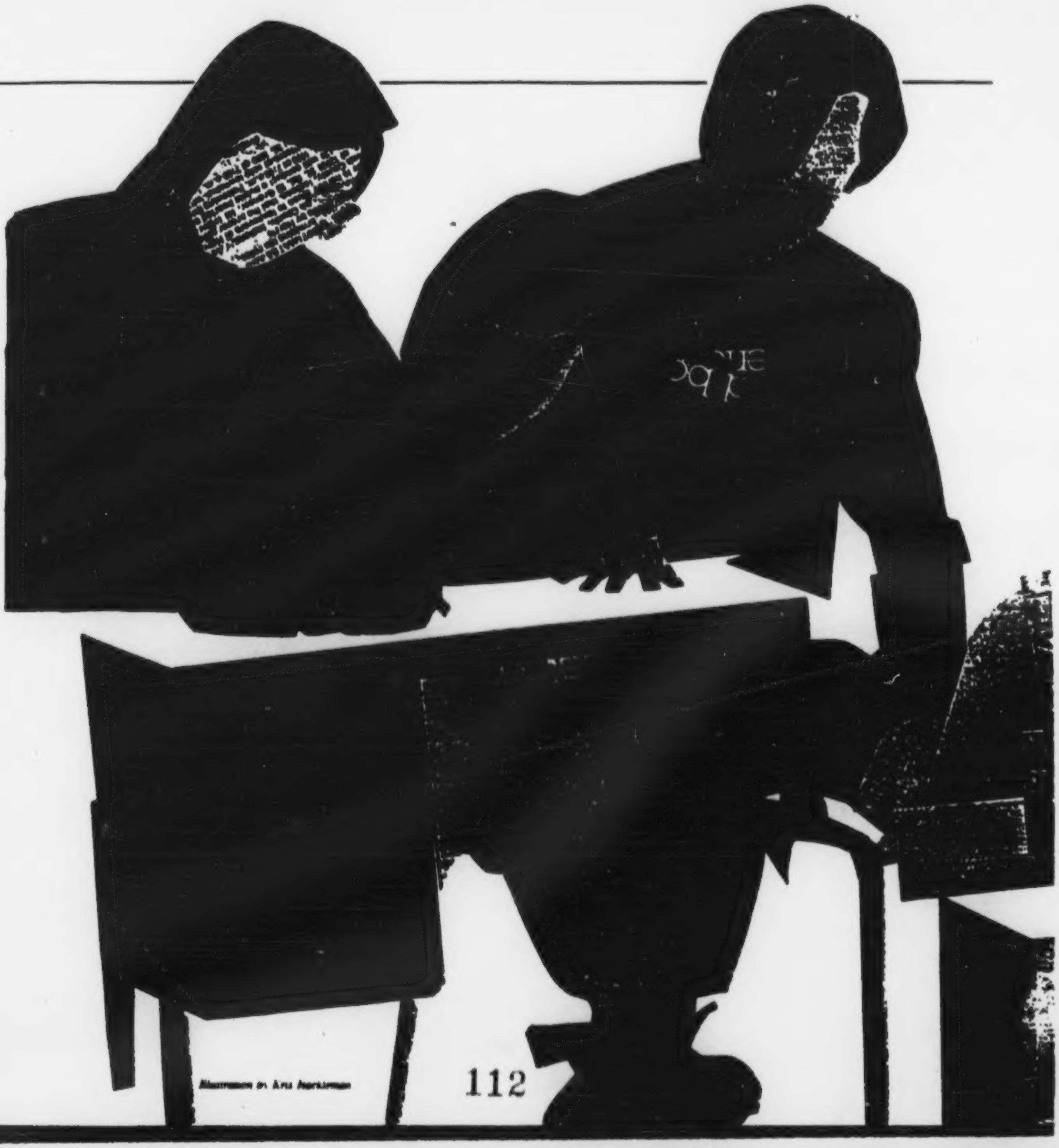
Paths to Partnership

What We Can Learn from Federal, State, District, and School Initiatives



Although most schools embrace the concepts of partnership and parent involvement, few have translated their beliefs into plans or their plans into action, Ms. Epstein asserts. The articles in this Kappan *special section suggest that shared vision and concerted effort can yield a variety of effective programs to connect schools, families, and communities.*

BY JOYCE L. EPSTEIN

LEADERS AT the national, state, district, and school levels are following new paths to partnership between schools and families. The articles in this *Kappan* special section illustrate a few of the many avenues that may someday add up to a nationwide highway system of connections between schools, families, and communities to promote the success of children in school. The articles, singly or as a group, offer descriptions of the real possibilities that may be adopted, reviewed, and revised by other educators.

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NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Two federal initiatives are featured in this section: the widespread Chapter 1 programs that specify the importance of family involvement and the selective, competitive FIRST (Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching) grants that encourage creative and innovative thinking and hard work by local districts and by individual schools to design, implement, and discover new possibilities for school/family/community partnerships. Diane D'Angelo and Ralph Adler challenge all educators to make the most of the new Chapter 1 regulations that increase options and support for family involvement. The FIRST program challenges educators to take advantage of unanticipated opportunities for the funding of special projects, particularly those that allow schools to develop practices that reach all families.

There are other important federal initiatives in addition to those described in this section. For example, Head Start continues its influential work in enlisting families as partners in the education of preschoolers. There is great potential, too, in Even Start – a new two-generational program that links the education of underachieving parents with the education of their children (ages 1 through 7). The aims of Even Start are to increase the literacy skills of parents, to improve the preschool activities of children, and to help parents understand their role and influence in their children's education so that more children succeed in school. The variety of state and local designs of Even Start programs have opened up new opportunities to learn more about how partnerships in the early years of childhood are developed and to document the effects on adults and children of alternative approaches.

Another promising development on the federal level is the support by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement for a new five-year Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.[1] The center will extend the research and development agenda on the effects of partnerships between and among the institutions that most affect children's learning from birth through adolescence. The investment in this center attests to the federal government's recognition that the joint role of families, communities, and schools is a topic about which we have much to learn, even as we work to improve practice.

CALIFORNIA'S POLICY RECOGNIZES THE CONNECTIONS THAT LINK SCHOOL CURRICULA, FAMILY INVOLVEMENT, AND STUDENT SUCCESS.

A number of national organizations are encouraging their members to understand and to develop partnerships. The National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers have initiated new projects on the topic of family and community involvement. The National Association of State Boards of Education has published a thoughtful booklet, *Partners in Educational Improvement: Schools, Parents, and the Community*. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) held a conference and issued a report, *Drawing in the Family: What States Can Do*. ECS is continuing to pay attention to parent involvement through its All Children Can Learn program and many others.

Although the new regulations reauthorizing Chapter 1 require participating districts to plan for family involvement, Chapter 2 may offer the best hope for developing coordinated programs, because funds in Chapter 2 may be applied to any local reform activities designed to improve the quality of programs and educational innovation. This could and should include new curricula and student learning, but innovative thinkers will be able to link parent involvement aimed at helping children succeed in their school work, homework, and learning to the criteria for Chapter 2.

D'Angelo and Adler's examples of Chapter 1 practices and the summary of projects supported by FIRST offer options that can be duplicated in most schools and districts. The experience of the schools in McAllen, Texas, which is detailed in a sidebar with their article, illustrates advanced levels of coordination of the new regulations governing Chapter 1, innovative uses of Chapter 2, and the judicious assignment of local resources. However, more examples and more documentation are needed regarding ways to include families as partners in learning by combining and coordinating Chapter 1, relevant programs under Chapter 2, Title VII, the Adult Education Act, the Education of the Handicapped Act, Head Start and Even Start, Learnfare, and other programs that provide resources and guidelines for improving education.

STATE INITIATIVES

Zelma Solomon describes the development of California's policy on parent involvement. Her account is testimony to the long hours and hard work needed to move from a simple awareness of the importance of state-level policy to the framing of guidelines, the issuing of mandates, and the passage of state legislation requiring all districts and schools to act to develop their own policies and practices designed to involve families in their children's schooling.

California's policy is important because it recognizes the connections that link school curricula, family involvement, and student success. It is unique, as well, in that the state recognizes the importance of parent involvement at all grade levels and with all families and does not isolate those in categorical programs. Perhaps most important, California's policy is written to replace top-down dictates with "enabling" actions to help districts and schools understand, design, develop, and implement their own policies and programs.

A second approach to parent involvement that is growing more popular in the states is to award competitive grants to allow some schools to work out the problems of connecting with families, to improve their own programs, and to share the results of their experiences with other educators. Warren Chapman describes the Illinois Urban Education Partnership Grants program, funded through Chapter 2. This program is significant because the state has recognized the multi-year requirements for school improvement and for family and community involvement and has provided schools with grant funding for a minimum of two years. Moreover, the program pays serious attention to evaluation. These features are essential for grants programs because only over time and through evaluation will we ever learn which investments will advance practice and increase knowledge.

Other state initiatives exist in addition to those described in this special section. Tennessee was an early leader when in 1986 it awarded more than $1 million in grants to urban and rural schools for various demonstration projects to boost student performance, attitudes, and behaviors.[2] A New Jersey program, Partners in Learning Grants, is structured to encourage and enable schools with experience in building partnerships to help other schools.

A potentially important new activity was initiated in Minnesota by more than 25 organizations, including the state department of education, the University of Minnesota, local colleges, the chamber of commerce, many state agencies, Head Start, African-American Parent Advocates, the Urban Coalition of Minneapolis, and other groups. At a conference, representatives of these groups conducted strategy sessions and produced a list of desired activities for school/family partnerships that require no funding, low funding, or significant funding and that result either in no major institutional change or in significant change. Building consensus and planning priorities in these sessions were first steps toward developing a state policy, starting grants programs, and undertaking other activities to help Minnesota educators create more successful partnerships with families and other community groups.

In its Parents as Teachers program, Missouri's state department of education has been a leader in the development of programs to involve all families in the education of their children from birth to age 3. The state is poised to continue leading with Success Is Homemade, a new program that will extend family involvement from kindergarten through grade 12. From the outset, Missouri plans to evaluate school processes and the effects of new practices, making this promising program one to watch.

Other activities on the part of states include Washington's requirement that competence in parent involvement be one of the "generic standards" for state certification of teachers and administrators.[3] Were this activity to be undertaken in many states, more courses would be instituted at colleges and universities to prepare teachers and administrators to work more productively with parents as partners.

Other state departments of education have conducted (or plan to conduct) grants programs or other activities to increase awareness of and attention to school/family connections. These include the District of Columbia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and others. These efforts, however, are often small, highly specific, and separated from a larger plan.

Despite some real advances in state leadership on school and family connections, Frank Nardine and Robert Morris dramatically highlight the unfortunate "state-of-the-states" with regard to family/school connections. Insufficient and inappropriate expenditures and allocations of staff characterize many states' efforts, and the programs in most states lack coherence. This need not be so. The examples of California and Illinois demonstrate the benefits that could result from state initiatives that are comprehensive, enabling, and carefully evaluated.

DISTRICT INITIATIVES

Izona Warner reviews the long-standing leadership of the Parents in Touch office in Indianapolis. Janet Chrispeels describes the real advances in policy and practice made by the schools in the San Diego city and county districts. The work in San Diego also shows the strength of nested support systems, as the state, the county office, and the city district all share the same goals for partnerships between schools and the families they serve. Indianapolis and San Diego send a clear message to other districts: find knowledgeable staff members and support them over the long haul; make it your district's business to help all schools help all families help all children.

Commendably, both Indianapolis and San Diego have translated district leadership into national leadership; each district has hosted at least one national conference on family involvement to enable educators and parents from across the country to share ideas, practices, problems, and successes with one another.

Many other district initiatives for parent involvement exist in addition to those described in this special section. An early leader was Houston with its sensible FailSafe program of innovative approaches to connecting schools with families, including strategies for organizing parent/teacher conferences in the secondary grades so that families could meet with many teachers on the same visit and programs to allow families to borrow school computers for home use to strengthen children's skills and adult literacy. More recently, the schools in Hamilton County, Ohio, and the local parent/teacher organization have coordinated efforts to build the capabilities of teachers, administrators, and parents to work and plan together at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Many district efforts go unheralded. Many other districts are at the "information seeking" stage, ready to take steps toward partnership if they are given access to more information and some additional incentives. The reports from Indianapolis and San Diego should encourage such districts to move forward.

SCHOOL INITIATIVES

Don Davies provides perspectives and examples of programs that can, in effect, "turn a school around." Family/school connections are, ultimately, a school-by-school story. In the final analysis, it is the hard work of principals, teachers, and other school staff members that will determine whether and how families understand the schools, their children, and their own continuing influence in their children's learning and development.

There are hundreds of schools and thousands of teachers engaging in successful practices to involve the families of their students. Their work is often unknown and unrecognized even in their own districts – sometimes, in the case of teachers, even within their own schools. Most schools and teachers, however, have not taken significant steps toward building partnerships with families. In most schools, some parents are informed about some things some of the time by some teachers. Families still feel "lucky" when teachers inform them about and involve them in activities with their children.

Davies' intensive work with two schools reveals key components that could be instituted immediately by just about all schools to ensure involvement for all families, including a more useful and more equitable distribution of information and assistance. He summarizes new directions and new definitions that can help schools begin to move in the right direction.

Other school initiatives have followed paths similar to those in Davies' demonstration sites. In our own development and evaluation activities in the Baltimore School and Family Connections project, involving five elementary and three middle schools, we have found that over a three-year period schools with little parent involvement and high barriers to communication can make notable progress. In our project, we are working with schools, a local community foundation, and the Lilly Endowment to develop programs of parent involvement, to evaluate their efforts, and to improve their practices over time. So far, we have gathered a good deal of information on successful orientation programs, home learning activities, and newsletters at the elementary and middle levels.[4]

MANY SCHOOLS ARE FINDING THAT MUCH CAN BE DONE TO HELP FAMILIES WORK WITH THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME.

Acknowledgment of Support

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WHAT WE KNOW AND DON'T KNOW

The articles in this special section reveal many accessible, reproducible, and adaptable practices, along with several key themes.

- Programs at all levels reveal similarities between parents and educators where differences were once assumed. Parents and teachers are finding that they share common goals and need to share more information if they are to reach those goals.
- Programs must continue across the years of childhood and adolescence. Educators and policy makers, who may once have thought that family involvement was an issue only in the early years of schooling, now recognize the importance of school/family connections through the high school grades.
- Programs must include all families. The examples in this special section show that leaders at the national, state, district, and school levels are working to involve all families in the education of their children, including those considered by some schools to be hard to reach.
- Programs make teachers' jobs easier and make them more successful with students. In visits to several schools, Shepherd Zeldin found that "those teachers who allocated time for collaboration rarely expressed hesitation in working with poor parents, were motivated to go beyond policy directives, and concluded that working with parents improved the teachers' effectiveness."[5]
- Program development is not quick. The examples reveal the long time and the sensitive work that are required for real progress in partnerships: 15 years and counting in Indianapolis; seven years in McAllen, Texas; more than three years of activities in San Diego; three years for developing a state policy in California; and between two and three years to see small but real steps in the Schools Reaching Out demonstration sites, in the projects funded by grants in Illinois, and in the Baltimore School and Family Connections project.
- Grants encourage unusually productive behaviors in teachers and administrators who might otherwise feel that they lack the time to initiate partnerships with families and communities. Benefits are evident with both small and large grants (as small as $200 or as large as $30,000) across all levels of schooling. The larger investments, however, are more likely to ensure principals' commitment and leadership – and schoolwide change.
- Family/school coordinators (under whatever title) may be crucial to the success of school, district, and state programs to link schools, parents, and communities. Coordinators guide school staffs, provide inservice training for educators, offer services to parents, and perform other tasks that promote partnerships.
- Programs should literally make room for parents. "Parent rooms" or "clubs" in school buildings or "parent centers" in the

community are important ways of making parents feel welcome. In these sites, parents share and discuss ideas, obtain information and resources (including borrowing print materials and video- and audiotapes), learn from each other about family problems and solutions, and so on.

- Even with rooms for parents, practices need to emphasize reaching and involving families without requiring them to come frequently to the school. Along with structures to involve a few families as volunteers or in decision-making roles, many schools are finding that much can be done to help families work with their own children at home to help them do better in school. Once considered the most difficult type of involvement, this is becoming the most relevant kind of involvement for families, schools, and student learning.
- In the 1990s technology can help improve many types of involvement. This includes radio, television, video- and audiotapes, computers, and other electronic connections between home and school, some of which offer the possibility of two-way communication.
- There are still vast gaps in our knowledge that can only be filled by rigorous research and evaluation of particular types of school/family connections in support of children's learning. We need both formal studies and clear documentation of existing practices.

IS IT WORTH THE COST?

How much is it worth to have twice or 10 times the number of families working with the schools as knowledgeable partners, helping students meet school goals, solving the problems that impede progress, building traditions of partnership? Most educators have not come to grips with this question.

As Nardine and Morris note, present allocations for program development and evaluation in the states are meager. The examples in this special section suggest that a variety of levels of investment can support successful partnership programs. We see examples that range from $200 for one teacher (Davies) to $30,000 for one school (Chapman) to more than $100,000 for districts (San Diego, Indianapolis, and some of the grants through FIRST).

Putting it all together, it seems that a modest allocation of $25 per student per year at the school level would establish a viable program of school/family connections. This level of support would cover the cost of a coordinator, small grants within the school for teacher-designed practices, evaluation and reporting costs, and other relatively minor expenses. In addition, $10 per pupil at the district level and $5 per pupil at the state level would establish a three-tiered supportive structure that recognizes that every teacher and administrator in every school, every day, makes direct or indirect contact with the families of every student. These continuous connections require investments in planned programs for successful partnerships.

THERE IS
NO EXCUSE FOR
NOT TAKING THE
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PARTNERSHIP.

Another way to look at the levels of support required is to consider that, realistically, there should be at least one full-time position dedicated to coordinating and facilitating parent involvement in each state, one in each district, and one in each school or small group of schools. There should also be ongoing, multi-year grants to encourage and reward innovative activities designed to link educators and families. A state investment might start at about $100,000, a district-level program might begin at $50,000, and a school-level program might begin in the $15,000 to $30,000 range.

As suggested by several examples in this special section, these costs can be shared through the innovative application of federal, state, and local resources. The investments may, of course, be greater than the modest amounts I've proposed, and they may need to be increased over time or as the results of particular programs become known.

Today, most schools embrace the concept of partnership, but few have translated their beliefs into plans or their plans into practice. Sometimes educators feel that it is simply impossible to jump the hurdles, remove the barriers, and solve the real problems that prevent them from viewing families as resources for promoting children's learning. The contributions to this *Kappan* special section suggest that this view is too pessimistic. Shared vision and concerted effort have led to a variety of successful programs to connect schools, families, and communities. There is no excuse for not taking the first sure steps down one of the many paths to partnership.

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1. The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning is a consortium of higher education institutions made up of Boston University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Illinois at Champaign, Yale University, Wheelock College, and the Institute for Responsive Education.

2. Don Lueder, "Tennessee Parents Were Invited to Participate and They Did," *Educational Leadership*, October 1989, pp. 8-11.

3. Washington State Department of Education, Regulation WAC 180-79-130, Professional Preparation, 10 June 1986, pp. 8-9.

4. There are five reports on the Baltimore School and Family Connections project, 1989-90: Joyce L. Epstein and Susan C. Herrick, "Reactions of Parents and Students to Summer Home Learning Packets in the Middle Grades" and "Reactions of Parents to Newsletters in the Middle Grades"; and Susan C. Herrick and Joyce L. Epstein, "Reactions of Parents, Students, and Teachers to Orientation Days in Middle School," "Reactions of Parents and Teachers to Reading Activity Packets in the Primary Grades," and "Reactions of Parents to Newsletters in the Elementary Grades." All the reports are available from the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students at Johns Hopkins University.

5. Shepherd Zeldin, "Implementation of Home-School-Community Policies," *Equity and Choice*, Vol. 6, 1990, pp. 56-67. Other researchers have reached similar conclusions. See, for example, James P. Comer, "New Haven's School-Community Connection," *Educational Leadership*, March 1987, pp. 13-16; Janice Earle, *Restructuring Seattle's Middle Schools* (Alexandria, Va.: National Association of State Boards of Education, 1989); and Jean Krasnow, "Building New Parent-Teacher Partnerships: Teacher Research Teams Stimulate Reflection," *Equity and Choice*, vol. 6, 1990, pp. 25-30.

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POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Parental Involvement in Education

James S. Coleman

Introduction

A child comes to school at age 6, anxiously released by reluctant parents. Or a child comes to kindergarten at age 5, presented to the school by proud parents. Or a child comes to the day care center, left by parents on their way to work. The struggle of a couple to live and make a living, to have children and bring them up, is a struggle that increasingly involves the school, the nursery school, and the day care center. And it involves them for a larger and larger portion of each day. The demands for earlier hours for depositing children, and for longer hours of day care, nursery school, or school do not decline. Rather, a major issue confronting many schools is how to satisfy parents' demands for an extended school day.

How did all this come about? How did we get from a society which could hardly pry children from the family's grasp to a society in which parents search desperately to find day care for their youngest children?

Clearly, parental involvement in the daily activities of child rearing has declined greatly over this century. One might shrug it off as merely one example of the general increase in the division of labor in society. Yet research shows conclusively that parents' involvement in their children's education confers great benefits, both intellectual and emotional, on their children. Thus, a major issue facing American education today is this: How to improve educational outcomes for children in the face of contractions in family functioning, when strong families are so important for children's learning?

The New Organization of Society

A historical perspective may enable one to understand the situation in which children currently find themselves. Over a long period of time—almost two centuries—society has come to be transformed from a set of communities where families were the central building blocks to a social system in which the central organizations are business firms, and families are at the periphery.

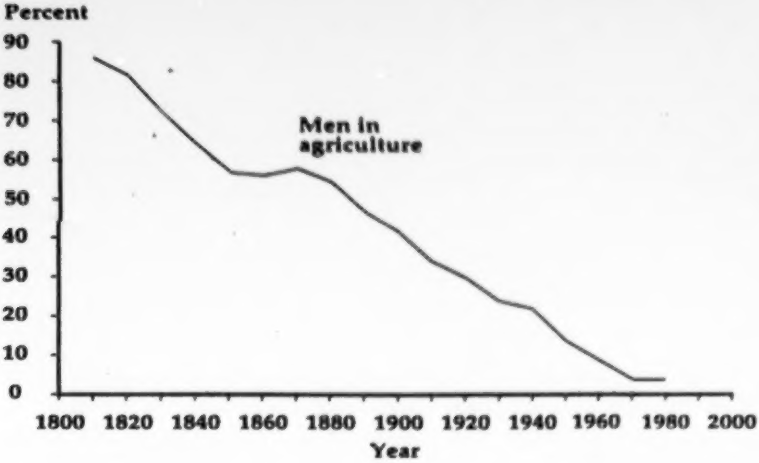
In the 18th century, nearly all production was carried out within the household. Both men's and women's productive activities occurred there, and children were involved in these activities as well. This meant, first, that children's opportunities were constrained by the family's tight grip; second, that children were sometimes exploited by parents in furthering the economic goals of the family; but third, that constrained though it was, children's environment provided a setting for learning the productive activity they would carry out as adults. This was most often farming; but whether the household was composed of farmers, craftsmen, or merchants, it provided a setting in which children gained the skills they would *need as adults.*

In the 19th and 20th centuries, this pattern of child rearing and training, stable for centuries, began to alter as the household itself underwent a major change: Household production was replaced by the man's employment in a job outside the home, usually in factory or office. Most often, this meant leaving the farm. The extent of this change is shown in figure 1, which charts the declining proportion of the male labor force engaged in agriculture. In 1810, that was 87 percent; today it is about 3 percent. This means that over this period, nearly all households changed from environments where child rearing was intimately intertwined with the acquisition of productive adult skills, to environments in which only child rearing took place.

Not surprisingly, it was during this period that elementary and secondary schooling came into being to replace what had once gone on in the household itself. Figure 2 shows this phenomenon by illustrating the proportion of boys between the ages of 5 and 19 who were not in school, superimposed on the proportion of the male labor force in agriculture. The close correspondence of the two lines suggests the role that schools were playing: assuming those aspects of raising children that could not be carried out in the household as productive activities moved outside it.

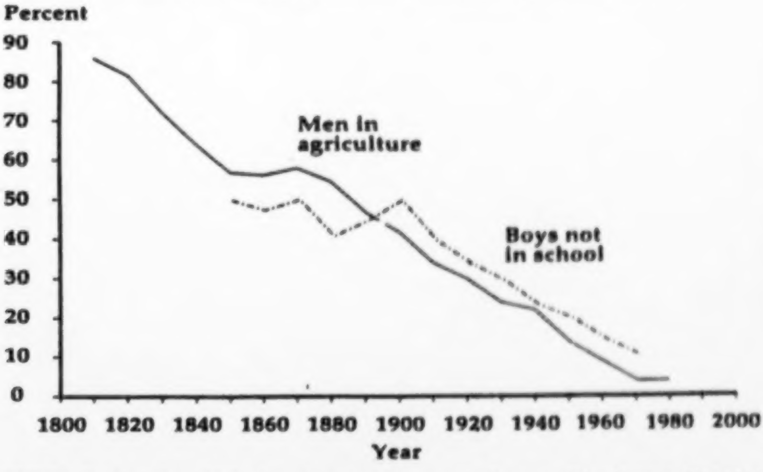
The school is a "constructed" institution, designed for a specific set of purposes, to perform functions that are no longer carried out in other contexts. This does not imply, of course, that the things learned in school do, or should, duplicate those learned in the households of the past, since the skills necessary to adult productivity at the end of the 20th century are different than they were at the beginning of the 19th. However, it is important to recognize what was lost when the child was no longer part of the productive activity in the household. Not only was occupational training lost (which formal schooling might replace with the skills of literacy and mathematics, knowledge of history and science, and specific voca-

Figure 1.—Percentage of male labor force working in agriculture: 1810–1980



SOURCE: Data are from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, table 182-282, 1975; and *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1986*.

Figure 2.—Percentage of male labor force working in agriculture, 1810–1980, and percentage of boys aged 5–19 not attending school, 1850–1970



SOURCE: Data are from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, table 182-282 and table H433-441, 1975; and *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1986.

tional training), but also the learning of work habits—responsibility for completing a task, punctuality, pride of craft, and all the other characteristics that are necessary accompaniments or precursors to productive activity. In short, the family, absent the productive activity that had earlier been part of the household, came to be less well equipped to transmit these personal characteristics.

With their loss of productive functions, families did not, however, become incapable of transmitting these characteristics. Rather, the everyday activities of the household no longer required these traits on the part of children growing up within it. To instill these traits or personal habits called for conscious design and intentional intervention on the part of parents. Thus, the household shifted from a locus where the productive activities themselves induced personal habits of industry, responsibility, and pride of performance to one in which these habits were learned only if the parents acted to inculcate them. More was required of parents if they were to be effective in bringing up their children—despite the fact that schools took over the task of teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic.[1]

Schools, of course, inculcate some of these personal characteristics as part of their everyday activities. However, as constucted institutions, schools are not explicitly designed to develop these characteristics, and thus have never been very successful in doing so when the family has not. An institution designed for this purpose would be organized differently than the typical school; it would be much less engaged in individual tasks, much more engaged in jointly productive activities.[2]

The Second Transformation of the Household

There has come to be, in the 20th century, a second change in the household with important implications for the school. This is a change that parallels the man's removing his productive activity from the household.

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[1] The research finding that in some underdeveloped areas of Africa, children of lower status families do no worse academically in school than do children of higher status families may be a result of the fact that in those societies the development of personal work habits in children arises from the household activity itself, and is not dependent, as in developed societies, on parental design.

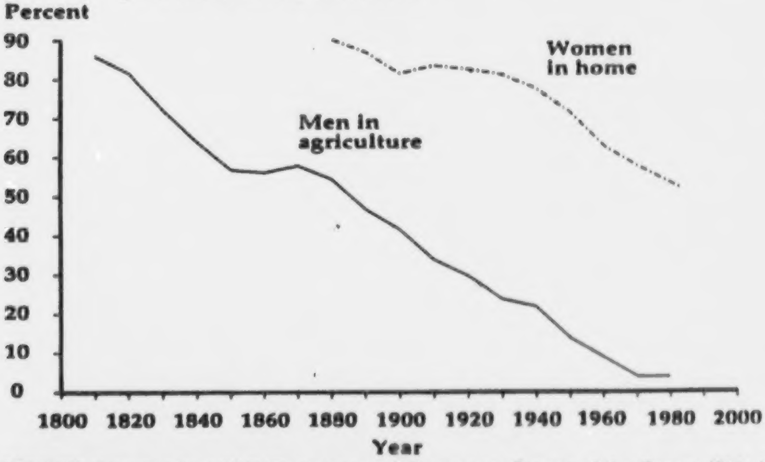
[2] Some approaches to learning do involve such joint activities, in particular the methods of cooperative learning recently introduced in a number of schools.

It consists of the woman leaving the household to enter the paid labor market. Figure 3, showing the declining proportion of women who are in the home and not in the paid labor force demonstrates this shift. The household's loss of the woman's presence parallels the loss of the man's presence about a century ago.

Figure 3 thus illustrates a problem for this constructed institution called the school. Just as the man's absence from the household during the day took away from child rearing certain functions that were then intended to be supplied by the school, the woman's absence from the household during the day has removed from child rearing certain additional functions. As women joined the paid labor force, the household lost certain functions that had been important for the school's ability to accomplish its task.

One change, apart from the need for preschool child care, is that it is more difficult for parents, when both work, to instill in their children those personal characteristics which lead to good school performance. Research results concerning effects on children's school performance of mothers working outside the home are consistent

Figure 3.—Percentage of male labor force working in agriculture, 1810–1980 and percentage of women not employed in paid labor force, 1880–1982



SOURCE: Data are from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, table 182-282 and table D49-62, 1975; and *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1984*.

with this: The research shows negative effects of mothers' employment outside the home; but the negative effects are not found for children from disadvantaged families (Milne, et al., 1986).[3]

The position in which many schools find themselves today vis-a-vis the family has changed. Rather than prying the child away from the family's strong hold, they are now confronting an array of families whose involvement with their children's learning is exceedingly diverse. Some are deeply involved and have the skills to be effective. Others are involved, but in ways that are ineffective or harmful. And still others take little time to inculcate in their children those personal traits that facilitate the school's goals.

The mother's move outside the household, following the father's, has expanded the task of the school beyond that of bringing about growth in cognitive skills, such as language and mathematics. The expanded task includes the development, either alone or jointly with the family, of those personal characteristics in children that bring achievement: good work habits, self-discipline and self-responsibility, and motivation to achieve. In addition, the mother's move outside the household has produced additional demands upon the school:

- Child care from an increasingly early age;
- Earlier hours for school opening in the morning;
- Lengthening the effective school day, till parents arrive home; and
- A school-equivalent (summer school or camp) to care for children throughout the summer.

The general principle to which all these demands point is that the school is a constructed organization designed to complement the family in child rearing. When the family was still an institution that could provide for most of its children's needs (for example, everything except learning to read and write, and learning numbers), the school's task was a simple one. As the family has weakened in its capacity to raise its young, the constructed organization that is the school must change its character as well. Part of this change consists, not in substituting for the family, but in facilitating those actions of the family that can aid most the joint task of family and school in bringing children into adulthood.

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[3] There are various conjectures about the reason for the apparent absence of negative effects of mothers' outside employment for disadvantaged children. One is simply self-selection: In poor, often single-parent families, it is the more vigorous, active, and skilled women who have jobs. Another is that the very fact of working outside the home is invigorating and opens a window on the world for women whose lives (and whose children's lives) would otherwise be more passive and more restricted. These differences, according to this explanation, compensate for the loss of the mother's time with the child. In still a third conjecture, the frequent accessibility to grandmother for child care compensates for the mother's absence in these households, while in other non-disadvantaged working-mother households, child care is more often institutional.

If this change is to occur, however, the school must recognize its role as an institution designed to complement the family. This implies a continuous task of reconstruction, as the family itself undergoes reorganization.

The remainder of this paper will lay out some general points concerning changes in family and community that have an impact on the school, and then indicate some components of the reconstructive task that schools confront in the face of these changes.

Social Capital in Family and Community

One concept that will be useful in characterizing the situation confronted by the school, and thus by children, is the idea of *capital* in its various forms. Traditional discussions of capital have focused on its tangible forms, whether financial capital or productive equipment. Building on this concept, economists have developed over the past 30 years the idea of human capital, that is, the assets embodied in the knowledge and skill that a person has. As economists have used the term, it has meant principally an individual's level of educational attainment. The more education, the more human capital. Like financial capital or physical equipment, human capital is a productive asset, useful in producing desired outcomes.

In recent years, sociologists and a few economists have recognized that the social relations that exist in the family or in the community outside the family also constitute a form of capital. (See Loury, 1977; Bourdieu, 1980; Flap and DeGraaf, 1986; and Coleman, 1990, chapter 12.) While physical or financial capital exists wholly in tangible resources, and human capital is a property of individual persons, social capital exists in the relations between persons.

Social capital can be of several sorts, serving different purposes. If a child trusts an adult, whether a parent or a member of the community, and the adult is trustworthy, this relation is a resource on which the child can draw when in difficulties, whether with schoolwork, with friends, with a teacher, or with other problems. If the relations in a community are strong enough to establish norms about the behavior of children and youth and to impose effective sanctions toward their observance, this constitutes a resource for children, protecting them from the predations of peers, and a resource for parents to aid in shaping the habits of their children. These are two forms of social capital; more generally, social capital held by a person lies in the strength of social relations that make available to the person the resources of others.

All forms of capital—financial, human, and social—are important for children's education. There have, however, been changes over time in the quantity of each of these forms of capital: In general, financial and physical capital have grown, as has human capital, but social capital has declined. The growth in human capital is easily seen by the increase in educational attainment in the population. The decline in social capital in the family is suggested (though not directly measured) by figure 3, showing the effective evacuation of the household by its adult members.

Other measures reinforce this assessment: In the 19th century and early 20th century, some families were three-generation households, containing not only children and parents, but also grandparents. Three-generation households gave way to the nuclear family consisting of parents and children, a subset of these persons, and thus a subset of the social relations that had existed in the three-generation household. This meant as well a loss of adult time for children in the household, for there were fewer adults. Now, however, two-parent families are giving way in part to single-parent families, as divorce and illegitimate births increase.

Social capital in the family that is available to aid children's learning is not merely the presence of adults in the household, but the attention and involvement of adults in children's learning. Adults' presence in the household is a necessary condition for this, but not a sufficient one. The amount of social capital provided by adults in the household may vary widely without variation in their physical presence.

An example from the Yonkers, New York, school system several years ago will illustrate the point: In the Yonkers district, textbooks were bought by parents for children's use. But officials discovered that some Asian immigrant families were buying two sets of textbooks, not one. When they investigated, they discovered that the second set was for the mother, to help her so that she would be better able to help her children in school. In these families, parents were not merely present in the household; there was a strong involvement in their children's education, that is, social capital for the children's learning. Furthermore, the mothers in these families had little human capital in the form of education, but the strength of their interest in their children's learning was sufficient to mobilize what human capital they had in the service of their children's education.

More generally, one can conceive of four logical possibilities as illustrated in figure 4. In cell 1 is the family in which both human capital and social capital are present: well-educated parents who are involved with their children's learning. In cells 3 and 4 are families traditionally regarded as disadvantaged, without education. But cell 3 represents families like the Asian families described earlier, who, despite the meager supply of human capital, do manage to aid their children, because of the strength of the social capital. Cell 2 is the typically overlooked case, the new form of disadvantage in the family: well-educated parents, whose time and attention are directed outside the family, and who remain unavailable to aid children's learning. These typically are middle-class families, sometimes intact and sometimes single-parent households, whose members provide little in the way of social and psychological resources for one another.

Figure 4.—Presence or absence of human and social capital in the family

		Social Capital	
		Yes	No
Human Capital	Yes	1	2
	No	3	4

Research results indicate the importance of both human capital and social capital in the household for the success of children in school.

The research results merely document what school administrators and teachers observe in everyday settings: Those children succeed best in school whose parents are intelligent and well educated (human capital) and involved and interested in their children's progress (social capital). Research results show that parents' education is an important predictor of children's educational achievement; and they show also the importance of such aspects of social capital as parents' reading to a young child, and a strong interest of both parents in the child's going on to college.[4]

There is, however, another form of social capital that is important for a child's success in school. This is social capital in the adult community outside the household. The importance of this form of social capital is less apparent to school administrators and teachers, because the contrasts lie not between families in the same school, but between schools themselves.

A school with extensive social capital in the community of parents is one in which parents have been able among themselves (or sometimes with the help of the school) to set standards of behavior and dress for their children, to make and enforce rules that are similar from family to family, and to provide social support for their own and each others' children in times of distress. In a community with extensive social capital, research evidence shows an important fact: The social capital of the community can to a considerable extent offset its absence in particular families in the community. For example, children from single-parent families are more like their two-parent counterparts in both achievement and in continuation in school when the schools are in communities with extensive social capital (see Coleman and Hoffer 1987, chapter 5).

Social capital in the community depends greatly on the stability and strength of the community's social structure. Two forms of structure important for the growth of community social capital that can aid in children's learning and in preventing dropout are shown in figure 5. Figure 5a shows schematically the relations between parents and children in two families, and the relation between the children themselves—and what is problematic in many communities, the relation between the two sets of parents, which closes the loop.

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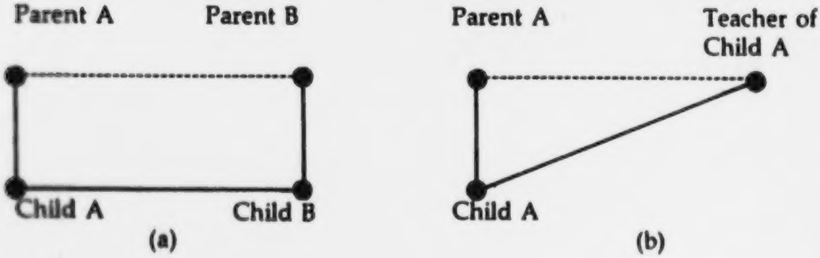
[4] The results described in this paragraph can be found in two major national surveys of educational achievement, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, in 1965 (see Coleman, et al., 1966, Chapter 3.2), and in the High School and Beyond survey in 1980 (see Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore 1982, tables A6 to A12).

Figure 5.—Two structures that support the growth of social capital in the community surrounding the school



(a) (b)

When this loop is closed, when the social structure among the parents exhibits closure in this way, Parent A and Parent B can set norms and standards for their children, can compare notes about rules for their children, and are not vulnerable to their children's exploitation of ignorance about what rules exist for other children. In addition, Parent A can provide support for Child B when necessary, and can sometimes serve as a bridge if the child's communication with his or her own parent has broken down. In short, each parent constitutes a capital asset both for other parents in the community and for children in the community.

The structure of figure 5b involves again the parent-child relation, it involves the relation between child and teacher, and it involves a third relation that is problematic: the relation between parent and teacher. This relation also closes the loop, and makes possible both support for children and social control of children that would be absent if there were not the information flow between teacher and parent that comes about with closure of this set of relations.

Change of Times and Differences Among Communities

The kinds of community structures in which there is not closure of the form shown in figures 5a and 5b are relatively new in the history of schooling. Traditionally, many school administrators found themselves not with a scarcity of social capital in the community, but with an excess. Communities were plagued with gossip, with strong cliques, with parents who, banding together, were able to defeat the aims of the school. Some schools continue to be beset by these problems. But for most schools now, the problem is the opposite one: parents whose communication with other parents is minimal, and who, as their child progresses toward high school, are unable to counter the force of the child's peers leading in directions they fear.

Through transmitted tradition or their own experience, school administrators have learned ways to cope with communities of the traditional type, whose excess of social capital could impede the school's task. The other kind of community, not with an excess but with a deficiency of social capital, is a newer phenomenon, one less often recognized, and one for which fewer strategies have been developed by school administrators. Yet the building of social capital is often feasible, and once built, it can constitute an important asset to a school.

The Lessons Learned Too Well

Parent involvement with a child's schooling can be of various kinds, some of which teachers and principals attempt to avoid. Interaction between parents and schools is often antagonistic or at least unpleasant. Parents contact the school when they feel things are going wrong in their child's schooling. Schools summon parents when the child does not meet the school's demands or expectations. Whether initiated by the parent or the school, such meetings are tension inducing, both for school staff and for parents.

Parental involvement with schools can be harmful to school functioning in another way. Parents want special treatment and special favors for their children.[5] They may use their influence directly or indirectly, individually or in cliques, to gain this special treatment at the expense of other children—and if they are successful, the school can be torn by parent-initiated strife.

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[5] In some school districts, the interest in special favors goes further: Parents want jobs for themselves. In a recent meeting of Kentucky school administrators, one principal from Eastern Kentucky reported that a major problem he confronted was adult members of the community, parents and others, attempting to get jobs for themselves or their relatives. This school was in a county in which the state and the county were the principal employers, either for work on the roads or for work in the schools.

These are two of the reasons why school administrators and teachers are wary of parental involvement in the school. There are others as well. Parents and teachers disagree on aspects of the curriculum. In Scarsdale, New York, in the 1950s, a group of parents who regarded Howard Fast's books as a communist influence struggled to force the school to remove them from the library. In more recent years, school conflicts erupt periodically over textbooks used by schools and opposed by parents.

Most of these forms of parental involvement were most prominent when communities and families were strong. It is not merely because of the community's conservative views that recent school conflicts over textbooks have occurred in rural areas where communities are strong, and able to mount a collective force against the school.

On the basis of all these kinds of experiences, teachers and principals have learned to guard their autonomy and to deflect community interference. But these lessons make the school ill adapted to a setting in which the community and the family are weak. In this circumstance, there is a second lesson: that schools have always been far more effective for children whose parents were involved with their education than for children whose parents were not. The effective functioning of schools has depended on the effective functioning of family and community. What makes some ghetto schools function poorly is that the communities and families they serve are weak, lacking the social capital that would reinforce the school's goals. Similarly, a likely source of the lower school achievement in the 1980s compared to the 1950s is the loss of social capital in family and community throughout the United States over this period.[6]

A New Role for the School: Rebuilding Social Capital

When families and communities are weak, the school lacks a resource that is central to its effectiveness in educating children. Lessons learned from a past in which social capital was abundant can obscure a central fact: *The effectiveness of schools in settings where the social capital of family and community is weak depends upon the rebuilding of that social capital.* This can be a task for agencies other than the school, but it is a task which is in the interest of no party more than that of the school. In such a setting, a school must in its own interests take on new activities to accomplish its task of educating children. If the school is to accomplish this task (that is, if children are to learn, and not merely be taught), then it must help rebuild the family and community social capital that facilitates learning.

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[6] Other sources are possible as well, the most prominent being the reduced curricular demands in high school resulting from liberalized course requirements for college entrance.

This rebuilding requires something beyond parental involvement with the school. It requires school involvement with parents. Once this principle is adopted, then questions follow: How can social capital in the community be constructed? How can social capital in the family be constructed? These questions are examined in later sections of this document. First, however, a specific problem that has arisen in many schools must be addressed: the problem of establishing authority sufficient to maintain the order necessary to learning.

Authority and Responsibility: The Demise of In Loco Parentis

The building of social capital in the community has a special importance for schools confronted with problems of maintaining authority. The respect of children and youth for a school's authority is in some part derivative from their parents' respect for the school's authority. That, in turn, depends on the existence of social capital among the parents of the school.

Schools have traditionally drawn their authority over, and responsibility for, the children in their care from the authority of the parents. The principle of in loco parentis, the school standing in the place of the parent, has been the guiding principle. This has, however, never been a simple task: Parents have been reluctant to give up control of their child, even to the extent necessary for the school to carry out its task. The ideal school, from the parent's view, would be one that took extensive responsibility for the child's educational development, but never exercised authority beyond that to which the parent, were the parent consulted, would have assented. The extensive conflicts between school and parents over corporal punishment are a reminder of this disparity between the authority parents are willing to give up and the authority schools find necessary to their task.

Yet in the more robust communities of the past, a consensus held that allowed the principle of in loco parentis to function reasonably well. Those communities differed in two ways from most current populations served by a school. First, parents themselves exercised stronger authority, for a longer time (at least through the end of high school), over their children. Second, a generally high level of community consensus existed, with the leading families of the community (whose goals and standards were generally consonant with those of the school) weighing more heavily in that consensus than did the families whose children were most often subject to the school's disciplinary measures. This sometimes led to an oppressive authority system in the school, but it was authority which was generally accepted by the adult community.

Both of these conditions have changed, reducing the school's capacity to exercise the authority necessary to accomplish its task. The reduced scope and duration of parental authority over children mean that the grant of authority to schools from some parents has shrunk, reducing the scope of rules the school can enforce. The reduced consensus, brought about by the absence of social capital in the community, frees deviant parents to contest the school's authority without inhibition. The school's principal may as a consequence spend time defending the school in court cases, or in extended disputes outside the court. Some principals regard the modern school in the modern setting as ungovernable. The principle of in loco parentis appears to be in permanent eclipse; some new principle appears to be necessary if the school is to carry out its tasks as a complement to the family.

Yet the only principle necessary may be the rebuilding of parental consensus through recreating social capital in the community served by the school. This social capital, once created, will support the school through the rules, norms, and standards which are part of this social capital. The creation of such social capital by the school consists, quite simply, of creating closure of the form shown in figure 5a. The relations between parents themselves, however they are brought into existence, will then operate on their own in the ways described earlier to make and enforce norms that reinforce the school's goals.[7]

This social capital among parents, once created, will not always reinforce school goals, nor should it. A strong body of parents is a force in the community that will often act in accord with the school—but as an agent for the children of the community, it also acts as a check on the actions of the school.

How Can Social Capital in the Community Be Built?

Bringing about involvement of parents with one another is an unfamiliar task for most schools. It is a task without an extensive body of knowledge to guide it. Nevertheless, some principles are useful.

1. Antagonistic and unpleasant contacts between school and parents are the result of passivity on the part of the school. If the school waits for parents to initiate contact, the contact is likely to be about a problem, and potentially antagonistic.

2. Most parents are occupied with other matters, and will not become actively involved with other parents unless that activity satisfies a particular interest. Some points follow from this:

- Merely bringing parents together without a specific reason will ordinarily be ineffective.

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[7] There is a second possible remedy for the problem of authority in the school, through a modern-day social contract. If a school system gives up its prerogative of assigning children to schools (through magnet schools or another system of choice), it gains an important asset: Since children and parents can now choose among schools, the schools may require students and parents to accept and obey a set of rules as a condition of entering and continuing in the school.

It is not, of course, merely the institution of choice that can bring about the consensus on which viable authority depends. Choice makes it possible for the principal to require more of parents and children, but the principal must grasp this possibility. This may be, as is done in some schools, through a written contract signed by parent and child, or it may be by verbal contract. The central point is, however, that once the school becomes a school of choice, a form of social contract between the school and its clients is possible that was not possible before.

- However, associations, relationships, and organizations fostered by the school can sometimes be built on existing common interests, such as having children in the same grade (for younger children) or in the same extracurricular activity (for older children) or with the same problem or handicap (for children of any age).

- A crisis or a common problem can often serve to pull parents from other activities to organize for action. Frequently cited examples are crises initiated by drug or alcohol use or by an automobile accident involving a high school driver.

3. Relationships among parents, and between parents and the school, established for one purpose persist over time, and can be social capital available for other purposes. This has been extensively documented in social research on communities. For example, Merton (1968) found that community organizations created in a housing development to fight unreliable contractors continued afterwards as a social resource available for other purposes.

4. Parents of teenagers and sub-teens have a strong interest in norms or standards of behavior and dress. However, they often lack the communication that gives knowledge about the standards on which a set of parents can agree. The school can in some cases overcome this lack through bringing parents together specifically on matters of dress, or rules about dating, parties, and nighttime hours. But these are only starting points; items listed in the Resources section show various ways in which schools can help create social capital in the community.

5. Certain barriers to parental involvement with schools can be overcome by modern technology. For example, a program called the Transparent School Model uses electronic mail and telephone answering machines to allow parents to leave messages for teachers, and teachers to transmit messages to parents via telephone lines (Baruch 1988). This program has been pilot tested in several schools in Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. A similar program has been used in St. Paul, Minnesota. A similar but less ambitious arrangement is part of the "Parents in Touch" program of the Indianapolis Public School System. As fax machines and other technology come into use, additional alternatives become available. Technology, however, provides only the opportunity; an active interest on the school's part in increasing parental involvement is necessary if the opportunity is to be used.

How Can Social Capital in the Family Be Built?

A task quite unfamiliar to most school administrators is involving parents with their own children. School staff might say, and properly so, that such a task, at least in its full generality, is not the school's responsibility. Yet one area in which schools can act concerns homework. Schools demand homework, and assume that parents will reinforce the school's demands and provide a setting in which children can meet the demands. But to expect that parents know how to reinforce the school's demands, and know how to provide a setting conducive to the child's completing homework is a serious error. There are specific, concrete points that parents do not know. How long does the school expect an average child in a given grade to spend on homework? What time is best for doing homework? What kind of setting should the parents attempt to provide? What are the pros and cons of rewards contingent upon finishing homework? Should a specific period of time be set aside for homework or should the child be free as soon as the homework is finished? What rules are best about telephone calls during the homework period?

What is true of homework is true of other contexts of parental involvement with the child's schooling. The principal point is that parents are unskilled in helping their children to succeed in school. Even well-educated parents often lack the knowledge of what practices in the home will most help their children to succeed in school. The school, on its own or with the aid of specialized professionals, can help parents help their children.

Strategies for Parents

Other sections of this paper have examined parental involvement from the perspective of school administrators and teachers. A major aim of the paper is to show that a school's success with children is highly dependent on the strength of those children's families, and of the community, which taken together, they constitute. It thus becomes in the school's own interest to strengthen these social resources, the social capital available for the child's education. If school administrators and staff can come to recognize the importance of this task to their overall goal, it will be a step in the direction of a mutual reinforcement of school and family activities.

But schools, principals, and teachers have interests of their own, interests that are not identical to the interests of parents nor to the interests of children. It is important for parents to recognize that, and to see the ways in which the interests of school staff can lead to actions against parental involvement.

Incorporating the interests and activities of parents into the functioning of a school can in the long run give the school greater strength for its task of educating children; but this is a more difficult task of school administration. It requires more consultation, building consensus over a wider range of people, sharing control, and sharing responsibility. To keep parents away from school functioning simplifies the administrative task.

These tendencies are natural ones on the part of school staff; in some schools, these tendencies are overcome, but in others there is active resistance to parent involvement. In such schools, it falls to parents to educate the educators, to lead them to see the long-run benefits of developing extensive involvement of parents with one another and with the school—or if the educators cannot see these benefits, to assert parents' rights to be involved with the education of their children.

Resources for Schools and Resources for Parents

A number of organizations, the school's PTA being the most prominent example, are designed to facilitate parents' involvement with their children's education and parental involvement with school and community. There are other organizations with different overall aims, but with departments focused on this aim. The American Federation of Teachers is an example. A few organizations of both types are listed below:

National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE)
10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301
Columbia, MD 21044
(301) 997-9300

The Home and School Institute
1201 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-3633

National Congress of Parents and Teachers
(The National PTA)
700 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 787-0977

Center for Restructuring
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 879-4559

TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork)
Center for the Social Organization of Schools
Dr. Joyce Epstein
Johns Hopkins University
3401 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
(301) 338-7570

Academic Development Institute
1307 South Wabash Street, Suite 205
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 427-1692

Some of these organizations provide literature related to parental involvement. The TIPS program has a list of more than 40 reports and materials on parental involvement that can be obtained from the Center for a nominal fee; the list itself is free. NCCE publishes an annotated bibliography of materials on parent involvement (Henderson 1987). The National PTA maintains an extensive set of materials for use by parents and teachers. The Home and School Institute has several publications directly focused on parents' rights vis-a-vis schools and on parent involvement (Schimmel and Fischer 1987, Rich 1988). The Academic Development Institute has workbooks and course materials used in their Family Study Institute, which trains parents to aid their children in succeeding at school.

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